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WHAT RIGHT TO DIE?

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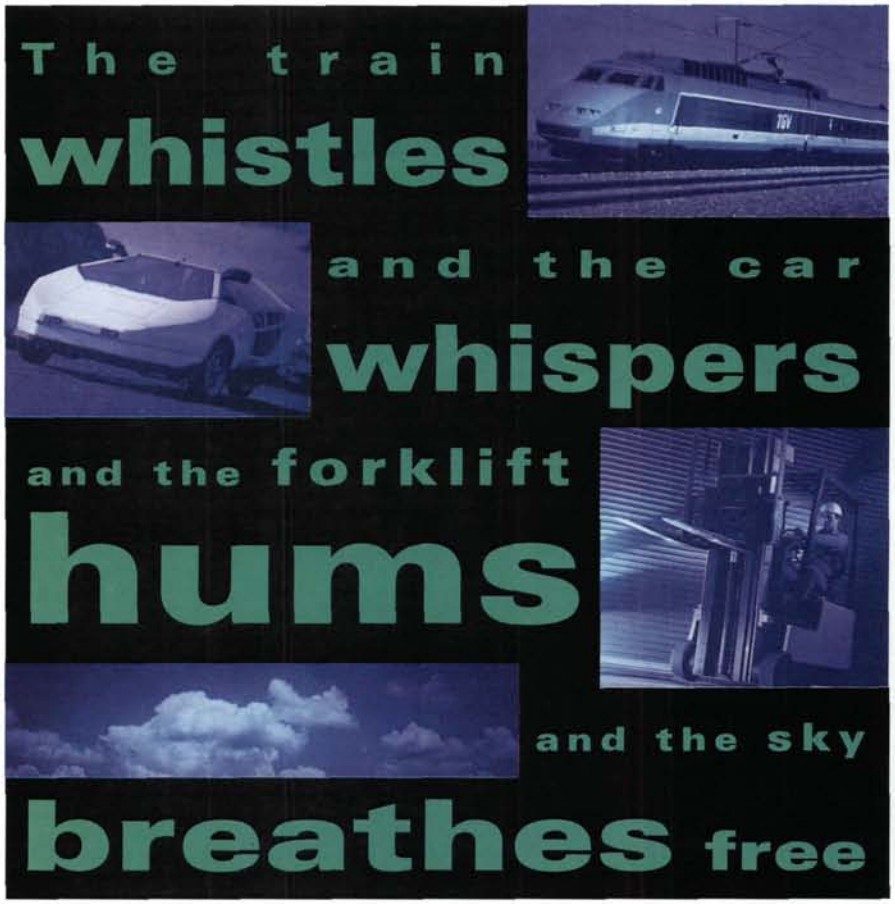

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A Weekly Journal of Opinion

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ISSUE 4,249

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Cover by Eric Baker for THE NEW REPUBLIC. Article on page 28.

4 **CORRESPONDENCE** St. Paul and gays (part 6), slaving in the kitchen &c.

6 **HANNA ROSIN** TRB: SISTER SLEDGEHAMMER Jennifer Dunn and the Republican assault on the gender gap.

7 **THE EDITORS** REVOLT OF THE MASSES Why Netanyahu won.

9 **NOTEBOOK** Bob Dole v. states' rights, Joe Lieberman v. good taste &c.

10 **SEAN WILENTZ** PRINCETON POSTCARD: ORANGE CRUSH The president's commencement.

11 **MATTHEW COOPER** WHITE HOUSE WATCH: BUBBA 'N' BIBI Clinton and the new Israel.

12 **ALISSA RUBIN** STAND OUTS Marching to different drummers at the Stand For Children.

16 **MICHAEL LEWIS** CAMPAIGN JOURNAL: AUTOMATIC PILOT Flying around the country with Bob Dole, wondering if anyone knows why he's running for president.

20 **STEPHANIE GUTMANN** DEATH AND THE MAIDEN Many of Dr. Kevorkian's victims fit a disturbing profile: women who are not at death's door, or in unbearable pain, but fear becoming, through illness, burdens to their families.

28 **JEFFREY ROSEN** WHAT RIGHT TO DIE? With recent decisions on physician-assisted suicide, the courts are once again inventing a new constitutional right. Twenty years after *Roe*, hasn't the American judiciary learned anything?

32 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ON FILMS: GATHERINGS *Stealing Beauty* is empty; *Two Deaths* is emptier.

33 **ANDY LAMEY** THE WACOUSTA SYNDROME *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature* by Margaret Atwood

38 **MELANIE REHAK** POEM *Counterpoise*

40 **JAMES WOOD** THE FACT-CHECKER *Cross Channel* by Julian Barnes

44 **PETER BERKOWITZ** THE ART OF ASSOCIATION *The Fragility of Freedom: Tocqueville on Religion, Democracy, and the American Future* by Joshua Mitchell

50 **NADER MOUSAVIZADEH** WASHINGTON DIARIST: BOSNIANS

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THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 214, Number 26, Issue 4,249, June 24, 1996. (Printed in the U.S. on June 5, 1996.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 8 & 15, July 15 & 22, Aug. 19 & 26, and Sept. 16 & 23, 1996) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. The New Republic Advertising Sales Office (212) 702-4882. Yearly subscriptions, $69.97; foreign, $99.97; Canada, $84.97. Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage & handling). © 1996 by The New Republic, Inc. (ISSN 0028-6583). Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, CD-ROM, issue and article copies are available through University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone 1-800-521-0600. Internet mail address: tnr@aol.com Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscribers: Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 602, Mount Morris, IL 61054. For subscription problems call 800-827-1289.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Search warrant

To the editors:

John B. Judis ("The Heretic," June 17) claims that I was part of a "vigorous campaign" mounted by "the left" to prevent Ronald Radosh from being hired at George Washington University because of his political views. I wish Judis, normally a responsible journalist, had taken the trouble to call me before stating this, for it is entirely inaccurate. Two George Washington professors did ask me how my own department would react to an offer by an outside funder (here the Olin Foundation) to establish a faculty position for a particular individual. I said such a case had never arisen and would be viewed as quite irregular. Typically, when a professorship is endowed, an open search follows. Were Olin to create a position in history at Columbia, I would certainly insist on that procedure. When asked about Radosh's qualifications, I said that as a scholar of nineteenth-century history I was not familiar with most of his writings and suggested some twentieth-century scholars who might be consulted. What Judis calls "left-wing McCarthyism" is a very serious charge and, in this instance at least, completely unwarranted.

ERIC FONER
New York, New York

Creature worship

To the editors:

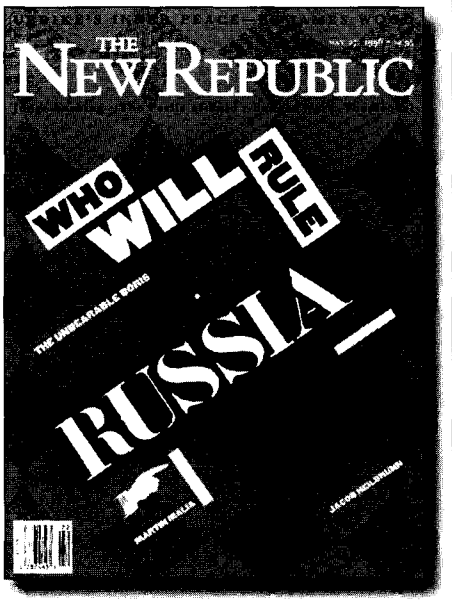
D.B. Delano (Correspondence, May 27) incorrectly claims Paul's statements concerning homosexual behavior are unequivocally negative. One vexed passage is I Corinthians 6:9, in which Paul supposedly excluded homosexuals from the kingdom of God. But literally he condemned only "catamites" and "sodomites"—i.e., male prostitutes and their male patrons. It's a non sequitur to generalize to all homosexuality from a repudiation of homosexual prostitution. While it's true that homosexuality as a lifestyle based on love and commitment was probably unknown in Paul's day, since, as historian Philippe Aries observed, not until the nineteenth century did homosexuality as a lifestyle emerge, that is surely no reason to read more into Paul's epistle than is there. Similarly, Romans 1:26-27 declares homosexual promiscuity, not homosexuality, unnatural. There Paul was chiefly concerned with heterosexual promiscuity, with compulsively worshiping the creature rather than the Creator, the point being that one kind of promiscuity tends to lead to another.

MARK B. PETERSON
Charlottesville, Virginia

Washington caps

To the editors:

Matthew Miller has lost his way again ("Cap Gains," May 27). On controlling entitlement spending, he has tumbled too quickly for a second-best solution. Citing the success of a binding legislative cap on discretionary spending as "our most reliable form of budget discipline," Miller recommends the same approach to entitlement spending. As a matter of bookkeeping, the greatest contribution to deficit reduction has come not from the cap on discretionary spending, but from tax changes. More important, the argument for caps confuses bookkeeping with economics.



Deficit reduction is not its own reward but one of several factors necessary to produce stronger economic growth. And as economic policy, how we cut the deficit can matter as much as whether we do so at all. The cap strategy focuses the budgetary mind simply on the cutting, while ignoring the economic or social interests advanced or retarded by doing it one way or another. The result has been a pattern of spending reductions that reflect the distribution of political influence. While greater fiscal discipline has had salutary effects, the element of it brought about by the caps has been largely mindless in its economic and social particulars.

Now we should extend this approach to the country's major public provisions for retirement security and medical care? An entitlement cap almost certainly would produce short-term savings. If the discretionary caps are any guide, these savings would come mostly from the benefits of those with the least political resources to protect them, while perverse arrangements that exacerbate the problem will survive unaffected. It's easier to cut a child's allowance than to teach him or her to make disciplined choices; but is that really reason enough?

ROBERT J. SHAPIRO
Washington, D.C.

Lingua franca

To the editors:

Ruth Wisse ("Shul Daze," May 27) reports the painfully obvious in proclaiming that the Yiddish language will not again become the basis for a thriving Jewish culture in America. Yet, in denying that there is a significant revival of interest in Yiddish, she also ignores the blessedly obvious. As a colleague and genuine admirer of her work, it is hard for me to fathom why Wisse, whose own endowed position at Harvard is one of the happy consequences of that revival, is so insistent on denying its existence.

While much of the recent excitement about Yiddish in America is indeed, as Wisse intimates, superficial and nostalgic, there is an ever-expanding number of very serious students engaged in the study of Yiddish across the country. A case in point: the summer program in Yiddish Language, Literature and Culture, which YIVO co-sponsors at Columbia University has, over the past ten years especially, experienced a steady rise in both the quantity and quality of its students.

Far more confounding, however, is Wisse's suggestion that the resurgence of an interest in Yiddish, which she maintains is only imagined anyway, is not nearly as "benign" as it seems. Wisse points to the oppressive linguistic politics of the Canadian province of Quebec, where public displays of English have largely been banned in the name of securing the dominance of the French language. As one who, like Wisse, recently left Montreal largely on account of its stifling political climate, I find this analogy particularly puzzling. For, as an opponent of bilingualism, Wisse has no cause of indignation about Quebec's restrictive language laws, which, as she well knows, are aimed precisely at reversing the historic bilingualism of that province.

The sad fact is that the survival of Judaism and Jewish culture in America is more threatened by its Jews' abysmal ignorance of any Jewish language—Hebrew, Yiddish or Ladino. As a result, the classics of the Jewish tradition and of Yiddish and Hebrew literature are closed to American Jews, except when available in English translation. Unlike more recent Latino

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immigrants, American Jews are threatened not by their ignorance of English, but by their ignorance of any other language. If the real targets of her polemic are the champions of English-Spanish bilingualism, why not say so directly and leave poor Yiddish alone?

ALLAN NADLER
YIVO Institute
New York, New York

Off the bench

To the editors:

Jeffrey Rosen writes in "Bench Marked" (May 27) that, "conservatives have calculated that the only way to enact their relatively unpopular political agenda—ending ... affirmative action ...—is through the courts rather than the political branches." This fall, the California Civil Rights Initiative will be on the ballot in California. Voters will decide whether the state should "discriminate against, or grant preferential treatment to, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin...." Polls show more than 60 percent of the voters approve of the measure. The Dole-Canady bill, which would eliminate many federally granted racial and sexual preferences, is now moving through Congress. Does Rosen think liberals are causing this?

ALLAN J. FAVISH
Tarzana, California

Paying the price

To the editors:

Hanna Rosin writes ("The Crying Game," May 27) that Congresswoman Enid Waldholtz's husband, Joe, "is accused of stealing his 67-year-old mother's mortgage...." Really?! My mother would have thanked me very much if I could have figured out a way to "steal" her mortgage, in order that she would then be able to avoid repaying the bank that loaned the purchase money for her house.

MARK S. BAUMKEL
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

To the editors:

In "The Crying Game," Hanna Rosin cites me as a prime example of the "modern-day Scarlett O'Haras" who "pull out traditional feminine vulnerability when convenient but pay none of the price—no skipping college, staying home to raise the kids, slaving in the kitchen." In fact, I did skip college, am staying home to raise my kids, and every day at 5:30 can be found—if not slaving—at least perspiring in my kitchen.

DANIELLE CRITTENDEN
Arlington, Virginia

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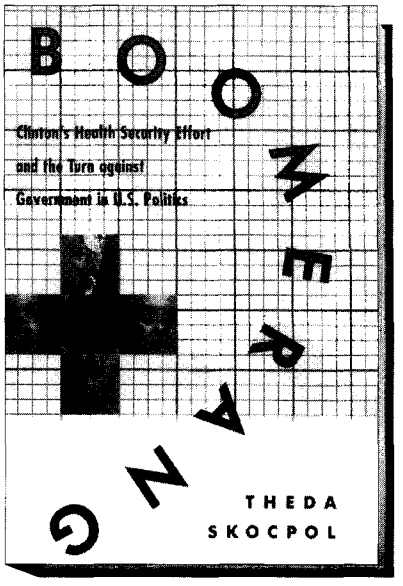
and the Turn against Government in U.S. Politics

THEDA SKOCPOL



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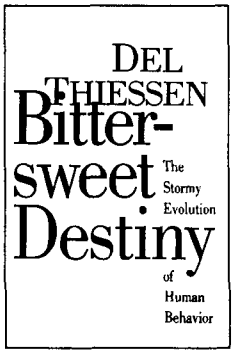

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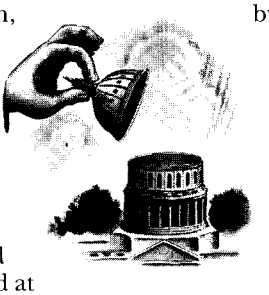
FROM WASHINGTON

Sister sledgehammer

"American women have struggled for decades to be seen as professional equals, and your remarks put these women back in the category of chattel."

Which American woman penned this bitter indictment? Catharine MacKinnon? Patricia Ireland? Pat Schroeder? If you guessed Schroeder, you're in the right ballpark, but still off. The correct answer is Jennifer Dunn, Republican congresswoman from Washington, who last month fired the angry missive to two of her male Democratic colleagues, Jim Moran and Paul Kanjorski, and got seven of her female colleagues to sign on to it. The women were miffed by something Moran had said at a hearing on Travelgate, after he recognized Virginia Thomas, wife of the Supreme Court justice and a top aide to Dick Armey. "What is Mrs. Clarence Thomas doing here?" he asked. "I really smell a political witch-hunt." Outraged at the implication that a hard-working sister was a mere shill for her husband, the women struck back. "Your actions today were sexist and thoughtless," they wrote, and bid him "swiftly" make amends to "all working women."



Since when did Republican women join the universal sisterhood? Well, apparently they had a mass epiphany one day when presented with a certain hard truth about the difference between the sexes. At an informal get together of GOP congresswomen in May, someone brought up the problem of the gender gap. The gap refers not to, say, lingering income inequality, but to a more dire national crisis: the fact that more women than men vote Democratic. This year the gap is wider than ever, with Clinton leading Dole by nearly twenty points among women, and Democratic congressional candidates leading their Republican challengers by sixteen points. The congresswomen concluded at the meeting that the gap was due to a big misunderstanding, and it was up to them to correct it. "I think we've gotten a bum rap," Representative Tillie Fowler complained to *The Washington Post*. "We're not an uncaring, unfeeling party." Dunn emerged from the meeting confident: "I think we can tell the story of what our party is trying to do, a softer edge to the conservative message."

The soft new approaches Dunn and company have come up with will warm the hearts of some American women—that is, if they happen to be domestic violence counselors, or graduate students in Women's Studies. "Every day Dick Morris stays on the Clinton payroll is an insult to the victims of rape," blares press release number three in the Fire Dick Morris series, samples of which are dispatched by Dunn about twice a week. Morris, the Clinton strategist, polled potential jurors for the defense lawyers of Alex Kelly, the silver spoon brat from Darien, Connecticut, whose parents whisked him off to ski resorts in Europe when he was accused of raping two local high-school girls. Nothing to be proud of, certainly, but probably a high priority for only a fraction of the small fraction of women who have ever heard of Dick Morris. And the victims of rape might have more pressing concerns. For instance, where was Dunn's blitzkrieg of faxes demanding Bob Packwood's resignation? Or her indignant defense of the Violence Against Women Act, (which she supported—but quietly)?

The next attack came from freshman Sue Kelly, who gets the Andrea Dworkin chair for her efforts. Her target was New York Democrat Charles Rangel, who in an overheated moment called budget cuts by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Newt Gingrich a "gang rape" of the city. "The latest figures show that more than 102,000 women were raped across the nation," Kelly wrote, taking Rangel literally. "These women deserve better from their public officials than careless rhetoric trivializing the brutal crime of rape." Even Mrs. Clarence Thomas, who let the offending Congressman Moran know she would prefer to be called Virginia Thomas, has been swept up in this feminist-come-lately wave, posing the kind of rhetorical question that would have made Hillary—at least the Hillary of old—proud: "Would they be happy if I went home and made babies instead of this?"

Funny she should mention that. It reminds me that in the spirit of fairness, I should say that several Republicans have come up with more substantive proposals for addressing the gender gap.

continued on page 49

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JUNE 24, 1996

REVOLT OF THE MASSES

"Hollywood supports Shimon Peres!" Big surprise. Unveiled by the syndicated entertainment news program "Extra" on the day of the Israeli elections, the dispatch reported that twenty-two celebrities—including Richard Dreyfuss, Jerry Seinfeld, Goldie Hawn, Jason Alexander, Michael Bolton, David Schwimmer and Kurt Russell—had, in advertisements in the Israeli press, endorsed the incumbent Labor candidate for prime minister. It is symptomatic of Hollywood *hauteur* that these actors and singers believed their views might sway Israel's electorate.

Doubtless, they now console themselves with the thought that others of high mind, among them many Israelis, were also let down by Israel's voters. Prominent among them, as it happens, is Leah Rabin, who said after the vote that she wanted to pack her bags and "get out of here"—implying that the legitimacy of Zion depends on its conformity to her prejudices.

Let us be clear. We also wanted Shimon Peres to win. This magazine has long favored Labor Zionism, recognizing that even before 1948, when the Likud's immediate precursors were imagining a state that straddled both banks of the Jordan, Labor was doing the practical work of nation-building. Labor also made the brave ideological concession for partition with which the real history of Israel begins. Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir never accommodated themselves to this reality, and they tried, sullenly, to reverse it. Benjamin Netanyahu, of course, also descends from this line; his father is an eminent historian of the nationalist school. But Netanyahu is generationally and psychologically quite remote from these roots and is, unlike his Likud predecessors, an instinctively flexible politician.

Indeed, the victor's first post-election speech struck just the notes the chauvinists in his own orbit would abhor: conciliatory to Israel's Arabs and to its Arab neighbors, insistent on democratic norms and civil rights vis-à-vis the hyper-pious. Like Yitzhak Rabin, who governed from the far right of the government he headed, Netanyahu will try to govern from his Cabinet's far left. It was difficult for Rabin, not least because the world wanted what his left flank wanted: more concessions to the Palestinians and all the concessions Hafez al-Assad wants. Netanyahu's important internal adversaries will come not from his left, of course, but from his right—from those more intransigent than he. And the battles between them will be fierce, and consequential.

These are not distinctions the Hollywood set is likely to recognize. Neither will its Israeli counterparts, deep in old alienation and fresh shock. They probably do not grasp that their association with Peres was one of the causes of his defeat. Many of these Israelis are supporters of Meretz, a leftist parliamentary bloc with its social base in the urbane and urban upper middle class. But there are also many such folk in the Labor Party itself. Peres's return to power would have meant their return to power as well, to Cabinet ministries and to other high places where the lives of the ordinary are decided. What made this prospect so horrific to the Israeli mainstream?

For one thing, these cosmopolitans are, in a society where many still live austere lives, quite privileged. And they are disdainful in ways that only the affluent, half-educated can be. Disdainful of those from traditional communities, they thought of and called such people "stupid Sephardim." These Sephardim are mostly Arab Jews, believing Jews but not exactly orthodox and surely not particularly intolerant Jews. When an Israeli from high-rise North Tel Aviv speaks of *schvartzes*, it is such Jews he means. This contempt for Arab Jews expresses itself in a cruel paradox, for it coexists with a credulity about, and esteem for, the Middle East's Christians and Muslims—Arab Arabs. Such esteem, coupled with a derisive attitude toward Jewish symbols and texts, rituals, remembrances and anxieties, sent tens of thousands to Netanyahu. And this meant that even if Peres had won the election he would have lost the Jewish vote, and this would have crippled his efforts to move forward on issues of Jewish destiny.

It is true, after the terrorist enormities of February, that the quotidian safety and security of Israelis emerged as the campaign's central issue. Peres's lead—Yitzhak Rabin's legacy to a partner he did not trust—began to erode. And Netanyahu charged that Peres had "subcontracted" the fight against terrorism to Arafat. Well, yes. But there will, alas, be terrorist incidents on Netanyahu's watch, just as there were under the governments

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of Shamir and Begin, who did not sub-contract anything to Arafat. Netanyahu may be especially aggressive in pursuing terrorists, but one can imagine little that was more aggressive than Peres's last campaign in Lebanon, and little that was more misdirected. It was not Peres's lack of aggression that hurt him with voters, but his unwillingness to attend to the Syrian targets that truly merited it.

Peres actually believes that there is a "new Middle East." The conviction that Assad can be one of its responsible citizens is only an extreme example of this delusion. There are others. When Peres talks with great excitement about the new relations between Israel and Qatar (population: 400,000, where they played the *Hatikva* on a recent Peres trip), between Israel and Djibouti, even the least sophisticated in Israel grasp the ultimate meaninglessness of these emerging diplomatic transactions. Indeed, the "least sophisticated" Israelis know one reality very well, and that is the reality of the Arab and Muslim societies from which they came, not Qatar and Djibouti but Egypt and Iraq and Yemen. And the regimes that rule these countries, or, for that matter, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, never showed the exuberance for a new, economically intertwined Middle East that Peres did. If they truly had, he might still be prime minister.

Israelis of Arab descent, rich in memory of the lands they fled, understand how slowly those countries change, and how deeply they are mortgaged to extremism, and when Peres tried to elegantly wish their experience away, they rebelled. There is nothing so corrosive of a leader's moral authority than to be thought foolish by those he purports to instruct. And not only thought foolish but deceitful as well, for his entourage routinely made assertions on matters central to Israel's security, and Jerusalem's future, and then denied making them, and then asserted them again.

It is unlikely that Yitzhak Rabin, were he alive, would have lost this election. And it is probable that, had Peres gone home to contemplate his Nobel Prize and Ehud Barak been designated Labor's standard bearer, Netanyahu would not now be forming his government. Barak, whom Peres's vanity kept him from appointing defense minister even as the polls spelled disaster, is not exactly cut from Rabin's cloth. Rabin was blunt where Barak is subtle. Rabin was crude where Barak is fine. But Barak, Israel's most decorated army officer ever, is a truth-teller. Were he the nominee, those beautiful souls of Meretz and Labor, the naifs and the wishful thinkers, the materialists in spiritual garb, would not have been the magnet for resentment they became. His toughness would have insulated his candidacy from their silliness. And the peace process would have proceeded, though with more caution.

Which is, media hysteria notwithstanding, what will probably happen now. Of course, the Palestinians will face a negotiating partner whose positions are based on Netanyahu's estimate of Israel's security requirements, not on his empathetic assessment of what the PLO desires. It is probably also true that the frequent flyer miles Warren Christopher amassed courting Damascus have been wasted. But Netanyahu surely will remember that Jordan's King Hussein did not campaign for Peres, as he was implored to do by both Washington and Jerusalem, and that is a debt the new Israeli government will want to honor. The rub is that, to be useful to Hussein, this debt must be payable to both the Palestinians and Jordan, a difficult idea for the Likud, whose people will naturally want to bolster the Hashemites they once reviled at the expense of Arafat's crowd.

Netanyahu wasn't the only victor last week. Indeed, his Likud lost about as many Knesset seats as Labor. His government will depend, therefore, on the indulgence of the three religious parties, stronger than ever before at roughly 20 percent of the vote. Of course, had Peres won he would have been dependent on these same parties and would have made the same concessions as will Netanyahu. On financial emoluments to religious schools and other enticements to the ultra-orthodox, freethinking Meretz would have been as helpless as the militant secularists now likely to join Netanhayu's government, especially the hawkish General Rafael ("Raful") Eitan and Natan Sharansky's seven-seat party of Russian immigrants. The abiding dividing line in Israeli politics is over security and the conditions of peace. So long as that is so, each of the two big parties will pay the blackmail of the religious to garner their support.

But, on security and the conditions of peace, two of the three religious parties are, so to speak, agnostic, ambidextrous. Whether there is one settlement here and another settlement there or any settlement anywhere in the territories, for that matter, is of little moment to them. They concern themselves with eternal questions: Sabbath observance and the dietary laws of *kashrut.* If they don't get satisfaction on these matters, cash will do or housing allotments. For all their present influence, comeuppance does await them. But it will not arrive until what has divided Israel's body politic for decades ceases to divide it. Do not look for this to happen soon, unless political desperation pushes Likud and Labor into another national unity government.

James Baker turned up on "The Jim Lehrer News Hour" after the election, and his appearance was a grim reminder of what it meant to have a secretary of state (and a president, too) unfriendly to a democratic ally. His glacial expressionlessness accurately reflected the indifference of the administration he served to Israel's perils. Those perils were far greater then than they are now. But Israel and the Jewish people seem doomed to live dangerously and on the edge of terror, the anointed enemy of rogue states and millenarian militias soon to deploy advanced missile technology. Still, there are many differences between yesterday and today. The most salient perhaps is Israel's full arrival as a regional power: strong, self-confident, scientifically on the cutting edge. Another difference is that those who now govern in the U.S., Bill Clinton and Al Gore, are Israel's friends. Not uncritical friends, to be sure, but proven friends. The kind of friends who have the authority to argue, and even to cajole. •

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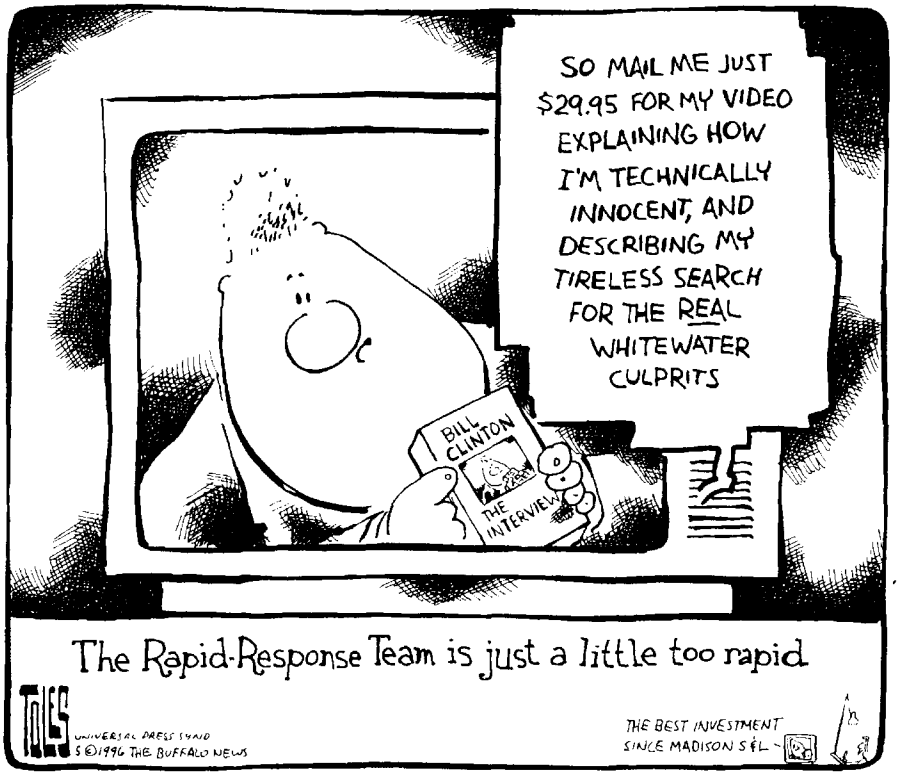
NOTEBOOK

MISPLACED GRAVITY: Critics of post-modernism have taken well-deserved glee in Alan Sokal's hoax article, "Transgressing the Boundaries: Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity" in a recent issue of the ultra-trendy *Social Text*. Some of these critics are on shaky ground themselves, though. In the May 29 *Wall Street Journal*, neo-conservative designated hitter on academia Roger Kimball crowed that the editors of *Social Text* "were unable to recognize that it was a joke ... neither Andrew Ross nor his colleagues were able to distinguish between Mr. Sokal's intentional nonsense and the unwitting variety that they themselves peddle to their academic admirers." But Kimball omitted an inconvenient tidbit: neither had he. In an essay published in the May issue of *The New Criterion*, before the physicist revealed his article to be a fake, Kimball denounced Sokal for his "egregious effort" to undermine respectable scientific inquiry. Professor Sokal has smoked out more than he thinks.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THE BEST INVESTMENT SINCE MADISON SQ.

THE ERA OF BIG GOVERNMENT: During last week's West Coast campaign swing, Bob Dole excoriated the Clinton administration for failing to "take a hard line when it comes to putting criminals behind bars." The GOP presidential candidate then promised to abolish parole for serious offenders, build more prisons and prosecute juveniles who commit violent crimes. He also proposed a constitutional amendment protecting "victims' rights." In other words, Dole wants Washington to dramatically intrude on the long-standing prerogative of states and localities to make crime policy—ironic for a man who boasts that he keeps a copy of the Tenth Amendment in the inside pocket of his blazer. In last year's welfare debate, House Republicans insisted on requiring the states they were supposedly freeing from federal regulations to uniformly deny benefits to teenage mothers. Here, too, the principle of devolving power to local communities buckles at the slightest hint that such communities may actually respond to their particular circumstances, rather than to the GOP's national agenda.

MR. CLEAN: In his crusade to scrub the filth from popular culture, William Bennett's most valuable ally has been Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman, Robin to Bennett's Batman. Lieberman puts his dour persona to good use, solemnly flanking Bennett at press conferences to denounce as "profoundly disturbing" the corrosive lyrics of rappers like Gravediggaz and the tawdry themes of TV hosts like Ricki Lake and Maury Povitch. As both a Democrat and a devoutly religious man, Lieberman would seem to lend a credible, nonpartisan face to the cultural clean-up. But, while Lieberman sermonizes about "rude language, foul imagery and gross behavior," he continues to serve as the regular guest of a talk-show host who can hardly go ten minutes without displaying one of those three: Don Imus, whose show features songs like "The [First] Lady Is a Tramp" and jokes about blacks in search of "white bitches" and "a bucket of chicken." And Lieberman's not alone. The list of moralizers who swallow their revulsion at Imus's racially tinged cracks and prurient fascinations in order to gain access to his downmarket listeners includes Bill Bradley and Bob Dole, as well. Lieberman's explanation for his willingness to banter with the shock-jock? "It's a lot of fun." Sounds like what kids say about rap music.

THIS WEEK IN POLITICAL REPRESSION:
"This is the essence of McCarthyism. Go back and look at what Joe McCarthy did. It's exactly the same." —New York Lt. Gov. Elizabeth McCaughey on Gov. George Pataki's forcing her to take taxis to public events

"It reminds me of what happened in Germany during the period when citizens were abrogated—their rights were abrogated—in a totalitarian kind of state."—Washington D.C. Mayor Marion Barry on the financial control board's decision to fire D.C.'s human services director •

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PRINCETON POSTCARD

ORANGE CRUSH

By Sean Wilentz

Princeton held its two hundred and forty-ninth commencement last Tuesday, and it featured a speech by President Clinton. For weeks beforehand, campus VIPs had been, understandably, in a tizzy, but they needn't have worried. The sun blasted through an early morning haze and dappled the throngs of graduates assembled beneath the maples in front of Nassau Hall. The faculty, normally eager to leave town or return to the library at first opportunity, turned out in what looked like record numbers. The crowd laughed and applauded on cue during the salutatorian's Latin address. The president spoke well, and at decent length, on an issue of national importance. And the locusts didn't sing.

As Bob Dylan's fans know well, Princeton has a locust problem, or more precisely a cicada problem. Every seventeen years, swarms of the orange-and-black insects (*Magicicada septendecim*) reappear, having fattened up below ground on juice sucked from plant and tree roots. Unlike genuine locusts, they don't harm local crops (not a big worry in Princeton anyway); but the whirring din of the amassed males of the species has been known to drive even the most single-minded of scholars to distraction. And even in the off years the cicadas cause quite a racket. When Dylan received his honorary Princeton Mus. D. degree in 1970 (mordantly described in his song "Day of the Locusts"), a "high winding trill" cut through the academic formalities and sent the raspy-voiced one racing back to the Black Hills of Dakota.

Tradition dictates that Princeton invite the sitting president to campus every half-century, to help commemorate the university's founding in 1746. Grover Cleveland spoke in 1896; Harry Truman spoke in 1947; and now it was Clinton's turn. (As the president noted, Democrats seem to have a lock on the Princeton gig.) But what if now, on the occasion of the university's bicenquinquagenary, the cicadas ruined everything? No problem, as it happened. A few days before the event, I ran into a university officer who had just departed from a commencement planning session. ("Clintonizing," he called it—strange verb, so full of possible meanings!) He confirmed that the *Magicicadas* are due this year, but assured me that this spring's uncommonly cool weather had faked out the pests, and that they would be showing up too late for the festivities. Sure enough, on June 4, they stayed home. Some universities—and some politicians—have all the luck.

A handful of grumblers had hoped that, cicadas or no, Clinton would stay home. Many more, especially faculty members of a certain age, had hoped he would make some reference to Dylan's song, or perhaps to the album on which it appeared. Clinton is, after all, in the words of the official university citation that accompanied his degree, "our first baby-boom president"; and in the past he has not been shy about acknowledging his roots in '60s pop culture. But quoting the lyrics on "New Morning" would have been awkward. Identifying with the album's great spiritual conundrum—"If dogs run free/why not me?"—could have been dangerous for a candidate accused by Bob Dole of lacking the maturity to babysit. Not to mention Dylan's line, "Once I had a sweetheart, she was fine and good lookin'." Clinton wisely stuck to quoting from Woodrow Wilson.

Looking out from the stage, past the university gates to the corner bank and the jeweler's and the streets beyond, it was striking, and a bit heartening, to see some Princetonians calmly going about their business, as if nothing were transpiring on campus. Some of them, perhaps, did so defiantly. ("See here, I'm a Republican, and I'm damned well going to deposit my dividend check!") Most, though, seemed simply to be making their usual rounds, unmoved by all the pomp and circumstance and political majesty. The ceremony, Latin and all, was a deeply American one; but so was their indifference to it. An early line of Whitman's came to mind: "The President is up there in the White House for you.... it is not you who are here for him."

Still, most of the people in the street stopped to listen; and Clinton, on this day, was worth listening to. He came to Princeton with a policy jock's plan, for tax credits to help guarantee Americans the financial resources necessary to acquire two years of higher education. Most Princetonians (and their overclass relatives) wouldn't really need the money. And as we later learned, most of us would wind up helping to fund the plan, in part by paying higher airline departure taxes on flights abroad. But in delivering his pitch—riffing flawlessly, his well-toned jaw muscles flexing large—Clinton made the point that so few liberal politicians seem capable of enunciating anymore, namely that the betterment of the lives of ordinary Americans is in the best interests of the fortunate few. And when, taking a leaf from E.J. Dionne, he explained to the graduating seniors that they were on the cusp of "a new progressive era," he sounded as if he had retrieved a long-lost theme for his presidency. Maybe he bragged a little too much about his administration's accomplishments: Princetonians know campaign boilerplate when they hear it. Overall, though, he was impressive.

Or so people were saying at the rapturous private reception for university trustees, administrators, faculty and alumni held directly after the exercises. It was a supremely well-connected, politically savvy, mostly liberal group. (The choicest bit of gossip making the

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rounds had to do with the young Trent Lott's allegedly perfidious role during the desegregation of Ole Miss back in the '60s.) Many of those present had told me, over the years, of their immense frustration with Clinton's flip-floppery. But after the speech, when Clinton actually mixed and mingled, those frustrations seemed to evaporate (as they always seem to in the presence of our great national charmer). There was a titter of genuine affection as Princeton's president, the blessedly restrained Harold Shapiro, beamed and presented Clinton with enough Princeton gear to outfit his entire family.

And, when Clinton finished his remarks and started to work the tent, I saw some of the most formidable egos of the Western world melt in his presence. Even Steve Forbes, Class of 1970, seemed to glow just a little when he joined the reception line and had his handshake and brief chat with the man whose job he tried to take. By that time, the president was sipping mineral water from a plastic bottle, looking a little weary but relaxed, every bit the reigning political heavyweight.

Haute Princeton, at least, had been Clintonized. And the only whirring and trilling to be heard was the sound of a campaign about to go into full swing. •

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

BUBBA 'N' BIBI

By Matthew Cooper

November 4 was a sunny day in Washington and Bill Clinton took to the putting green that he had installed a few yards from the Oval Office. The finely manicured patch of turf is terra firma for Clinton, his getaway. Not surprisingly, then, the president was by himself when Anthony Lake came dashing toward him with Deputy Chief of Staff Harold Ickes just a few paces behind. Lake told Clinton the news: Yitzhak Rabin was dead, assassinated at a peace rally. This was not the first time that the mild-mannered Lake had brought bad news to Clinton. Conveying the deaths of American soldiers, whether in Somalia or on training missions, regularly fell to Lake. But never before had the national security adviser or even Ickes—Clinton's friend for more than a generation—seen the Arkansan so upset. Instead of becoming misty eyed or biting his lip, the usual expressions of his empathy, Clinton sobbed inconsolably.

Clinton's attachment to Israel is visceral, instinctual. Part of it is clearly born of Clinton's political needs. Why not be the most pro-Israel president in American history? What upside was there for Ike battling Ben-Gurion over Suez or Bush and Baker trying to nickel and dime Israel over loan guarantees? If the budget deficit made him pinched at home, unable to fill his LBJ-sized belief in the efficacy of government, then Israel was a place where a few billion could still make a difference. Modest support plus diplomatic muscle might equal history's greatest concord. But Clinton's attachment to Israel is not motivated solely by a need for applause at AIPAC fund-raisers or a longing to enshrine his legacy. Clinton had long been counseled by his pastors at Little Rock's Immanuel Baptist, first W.O. Vaught and then Rex Horne, about the importance of the Holy Land and its chosen people.

Clinton's attachment to Rabin was particularly intense. It lacked the jocularity of his meetings with the beefy Helmut Kohl. The faux intimacy of Renaissance Weekend was not part of the general's lexicon. Still, there were parallels to which Clinton clung. "Both of them were challengers who moved their parties away from the soft left," says a Clinton ally. To this day, only a few framed photos occupy the credenza outside the Oval Office near the desk of the president's secretary, Betty Currie. All of them are of Mideast peace signings.

Clinton and his allies had been in denial about the possibility of a Likud victory. "We were not thinking about it with great energy," confesses a senior administration official. No kidding. The Clintonites couldn't—wouldn't—see it: Peres was Israel's Dole, unable to win the big one. Almost willfully, Clinton officials put Bibi Netanyahu out of their minds even though his youth and vigor had its analog in Clinton's (or Newt's) rise. Clinton himself stayed up until 1 a.m. in the White House residence watching the returns. Like so many, he had been falsely buoyed by the exit polls. As he caught bits and pieces of the returns on CNN, his mood and that of his aides soured. Dennis Ross, the Bush holdover who has become the State Department's point man on the region, was, say Clinton officials, particularly frustrated. Seven years of work seemed jeopardized. When the verdict was in, Clinton leapt toward the personal, telling aides that he needed to know Netanyahu better. The two had met briefly in Jerusalem when Clinton attended the anti-terrorism summit earlier this year and had chatted briefly at the Rabin funeral and still another time, for a brief moment, when Netanyahu had paid a courtesy call on Lake. Otherwise they were strangers.

What now for the Clinton administration? Officials are painstakingly trying not to prejudge Netanyahu, hoping that he'll emerge as the centrist he portrayed himself as in the waning days of the campaign. Senior administration officials rest their hopes on the following set of prayers ... er ... assumptions:

Bibi is a pragmatist. Clinton officials are banking on Netanyahu's political savvy. They assume that, unlike the Clinton of 1993, he'll recognize his slim mandate. He won't go settlement happy, they pray, and he won't trash the region's glasnost. "He is a very different prime

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minister than Rabin or Peres or Shamir," says one senior administration official. "He's not at the end of his career. He wants a future."

Middle East peace is institutionalized. The hope among Clinton officials is that Middle East peace is now a fact of life that no prime minister can entirely reverse. There's something to that theory. Relations with Arab states from Morocco to Bahrain are warming; a regional economic framework has been built around events like the Casablanca summit where Arab and Israeli businessmen from sixty-one nations shook hands over a bevy of joint projects. Forget about the Arab nations, Israel is enjoying 6.8 percent economic growth, owing in large measure to foreign trade. Only ninety-six countries recognized Israel before the Madrid conference in 1991; today, it's 157. The number of tourists to Israel has doubled since 1991. Israeli exports to Asia leapt 33 percent in 1994 alone. These other lucrative markets are vulnerable if Israel checks out of the peace process. Indeed, the markets will probably deny Ariel Sharon the Financial Ministry he covets, lest investors get rattled. Moshe Ahrens, Clintonites suspect, will get the top financial post.

What's more, Clinton officials hope that ballast will be provided by all the Palestinians and Israelis who now deal with each other on a regular basis. Literally hundreds of officials from both sides are involved in the final status negotiations, for example. "Likud spent years trying to find Palestinians with whom they could negotiate," says the same senior Clinton official. "The PLO never countenanced such talks and the process failed. Now there is a Palestinian institution with which they must deal."

Bibi can tame the crazies. The hope in the Clinton administration is that Netanyahu will keep the Sharons and the Eitans at bay by giving them lower-level positions while putting more reasonable sorts in senior posts. Clinton administration officials would be encouraged to see Yitzhak Mordecai, who has commanded Israeli forces on three fronts, as the next defense minister. Mordecai, who is of Iranian descent and popular in Israel, is a hawk, but considered moderate. He urged the Labor government not to press too far north into Lebanon during this spring's Grapes of Wrath operation against Katyusha-hurling guerrillas.

Clinton is popular. Clinton administration officials know that public opinion polls show Bill Clinton to be overwhelmingly liked in Israel. Thus, they're hoping that Netanyahu will be loath to confront him. "He's not like Bush and Baker, Texans who were said not to have a visceral feel for Israel," says Robert Zoellick, a senior foreign policy adviser under Bush.

What if Netanyahu doesn't turn out to be the pragmatist that the Clintonites are praying for? It won't matter—not in terms of White House policy anyway. It's hard to imagine the Clinton White House proposing to, say, withold aid as the Bush administration threatened when they briefly attempted to deny Israel loan guarantees during the zenith of its Russian immigration. "I can't see them showing any guts," says Zoellick. He's right. Clinton will weep for Israel, but he won't fight her. •

Who stands for children?

STAND OUTS

By Alissa Rubin

In the racially diverse crowd of some 200,000 amassed on the Washington mall for the Stand For Children, Marilyn Olds looked fairly typical. A neatly dressed black woman in her 40s wearing navy shorts and a sleeveless top, Olds was sitting surrounded by kids and young adults on a worn blanket.

"The welfare system has crippled a lot of women," she said firmly as she handed a peanut butter sandwich to one of her grandchildren. "You know, it's like they say, if you keep on feeding a baby on a bottle, he'll never learn to use a spoon."

That was hardly the message I expected to hear, given the pre-event publicity. The Stand For Children was organized by the Children's Defense Fund, a group that advocates increased federal and state spending on programs for kids and that has positioned itself against Republican-sponsored reforms that would end current guarantees of welfare. In the week leading up to the rally, conservatives charged that it was using kids to camouflage a liberal, big government agenda favored by welfare lobbyists and poverty system bureaucrats. "The professed goal is to call attention to the plight of children, but its real goal is to defend the continuing growth of the welfare system and criticize those in Congress who have tried to reform it," said Robert Rector, a senior policy analyst at the conservative Heritage Foundation.

The conservatives' charges landed on the front page of major papers as well as the six o'clock news. The charges stuck in the Washington media, not least because the Children's Defense Fund's president, Marian Wright Edelman, is something of a liberal icon. A close friend of Hillary Rodham Clinton, who once chaired the Fund's board, Edelman opposes many aspects of a welfare system overhaul. She has called the Republican proposal for block-granting welfare close to "evil" and said that the limits on welfare and Medicaid spending constituted "an unbelievable budget massacre of the weakest." Notwithstanding such statements, Edelman claimed—rather implausibly—that the Stand For Children "was not a political event." If it wasn't political why hold it in Washington? Why not at Disneyworld in Orlando, or in Kansas City or Seattle?

But if the march was in fact political, many of the marchers seemed unaware of Washington's sharply partisan welfare debate, and even ambivalent about the system. To be sure, there were some who fit the traditional liberal stereotype. The AFL-CIO sent hundreds of buses,

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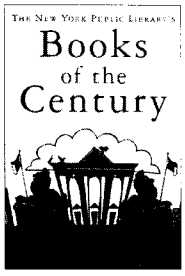

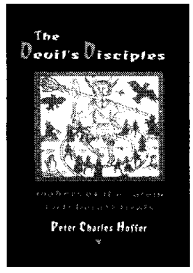

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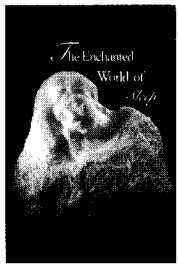

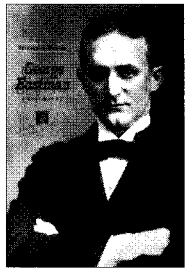

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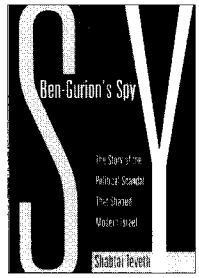

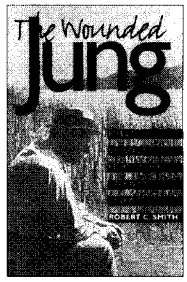

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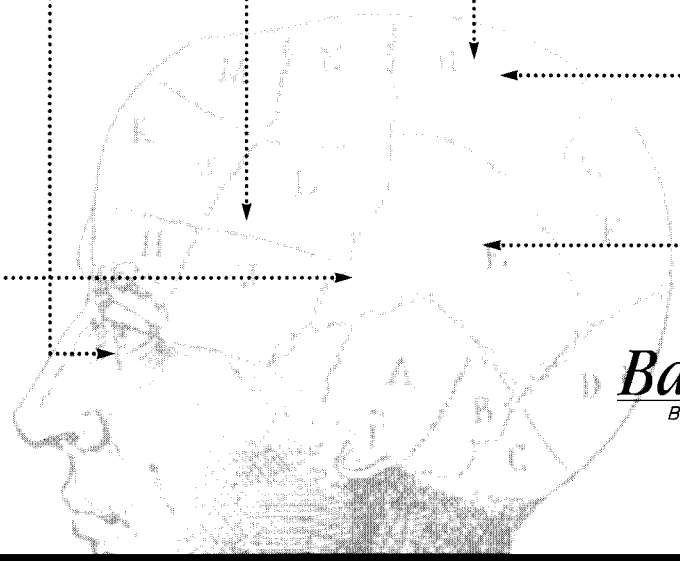

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and many of their members carried signs saying "America Needs a Raise." The United Church of Christ, one of the most liberal of the Protestant denominations, brought hundreds of people.

But in the end it was not groups but individuals who got on buses in Jackson, Mississippi, and Bangor, Maine. They came not to hear speeches from political leaders—indeed there were none on the program save Edelman's thirty-minute sermon, which commanded only sporadic attention. (A young woman tapped my arm and asked, "Is she the one who designed this, like Farrakhan did the Million Man March?") Most people came because this was an event that seemed to validate the stuff of their daily lives: they came to say that their often unnoticed work as a mother, a teacher, a day care counselor, a nurse, really was worth national attention.

"I have never seen so many people at the same time," said Marvilet Frances, a shy black woman of 25 who had boarded a bus in Raleigh, North Carolina, at five in the morning to come to the march. Like many of the marchers I spoke to, this was her first visit to Washington. Politics? She shook her head. She didn't have anything to say about politics. Children? She has none of her own, but works with children in a community center and feels she wants to do something for kids. Welfare? She had a lifetime of knowledge and a lot to say. "There is enough money in AFDC, but they should screen people better because in some cases—I see them every week where I work—the adults receive the money, and it's up to them to use it for the kids, and a lot of them don't. But I'm sure if you cut AFDC, you would have a lot more starving kids."

She should know. "My mother is 46; she's been on public assistance since we were babies," said Frances, who is one of five children. "Mother went through third grade; she didn't have any skills. We could not have survived were it not for the assistance."

But this scarcely made her a proponent of welfare, which, in the vernacular of poverty, she called "the system." "It [welfare] is really like a cycle; once you're in it, you see everybody else in it, and so you feel like it's the right thing to do. That's what my brothers told me. They wanted me to have kids so that I could get on the system and help out with the family. Everybody lives in one house so the more income that comes into the house the more there is," she said. For reasons she can't express other than to say she "just prayed to the Lord," she resisted that pressure, was the only person in her family to graduate high school, and went to college.

Marilyn Olds, who condemns welfare as equivalent to keeping a baby on a bottle, lives in public housing in Richmond, Virginia, and receives Food Stamps and AFDC for one of the two grandchildren she is bringing up. Asked if she works, she answered with a line that could have been written by Ralph Reed: "Family, church and community, those are my jobs."

And she takes those jobs seriously. A year ago, when warfare broke out between her housing project and a neighboring one, she organized the mothers in her project into a sort of civilian patrol. "The children could never go outside on account of the guns," she said. Now the guns are quiet, the mothers have been awarded a cellular phone by the local police department, and at least for the moment the children are safe.

She went to the march because she's fought for her children's safety, and she wanted someone to know that she's not just a welfare grandmother in a public housing project. "When my kids ask me, 'Where were you on June 1, 1996?' I want to be able to tell them I was standing for you," said Olds.

Terri-Jo Sullivan, who came from Rockland, Maine, got on a bus because she was angry at Washington politicians. She saw this first visit to the capital as a chance to express her frustration with the stigma that seems always to be attached to welfare. "I just feel there's a lot of male politicians making these decisions, and they don't know where they are coming from.... Why don't they go after the people who abuse the system? And there are so many parts of the government to cut."

Sullivan, who is white, has two children, ages 9 and 4. She used to work two jobs and go to school. But her oldest son was doing badly and acting out. "Now I'm on the system. I never thought I would be, but since I quit my jobs I get Food Stamps, Medicaid and AFDC. It's the first time I've ever been covered by health care." Her son is much better now, she said.

As I was about to leave, I saw a middle-aged black woman with elegant gold-painted fingernails sitting on a knoll looking out at the dwindling crowd. Her name was Muriel Hoover, and she runs a day care center out of her home in Queens, New York. It is violence against kids—on the streets and in the home—that made her pack a lunch and get on a bus for Washington.

"There are kids I know in my community where the families are all into drugs, the kids who are 3 and 4 years old can tell you what every kind of drug is ... the parents take the money—the AFDC check that's for the kids—and there's no milk, there's no breakfast, the kids go to school hungry." She wants to see a return to more traditional values and better monitoring of who gets welfare.

She speaks from experience. Her daughter became a drug addict, and Muriel Hoover had to go to court to take her grandchildren away from her. Her youngest grandson was a crack baby. "We thought he was going to die, his speech was delayed, the doctors told us they didn't know if he could hold thoughts." She looked over at her silent 8-year-old grandson, who was playing with a long stick. Medicaid helped her. The child got speech therapy and now is on the honor roll in his third-grade class. "He's doing so well," she said. This is her private victory, though she doesn't call it that.

I asked if she considers herself a Democrat or a Republican. "Oh, I'm a Democrat," she said, adding, "But I split my vote." Which Republicans has she has voted for? She thought for a long time. "Ronald Reagan, that was the one. I liked him." Why? "I guess he was the best one of the choices that year."

ALISSA RUBIN is a senior writer at *Congressional Quarterly*.

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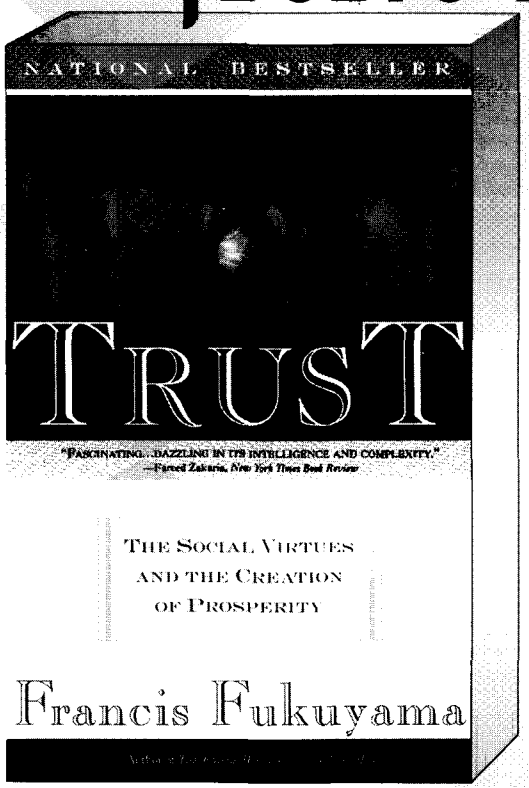
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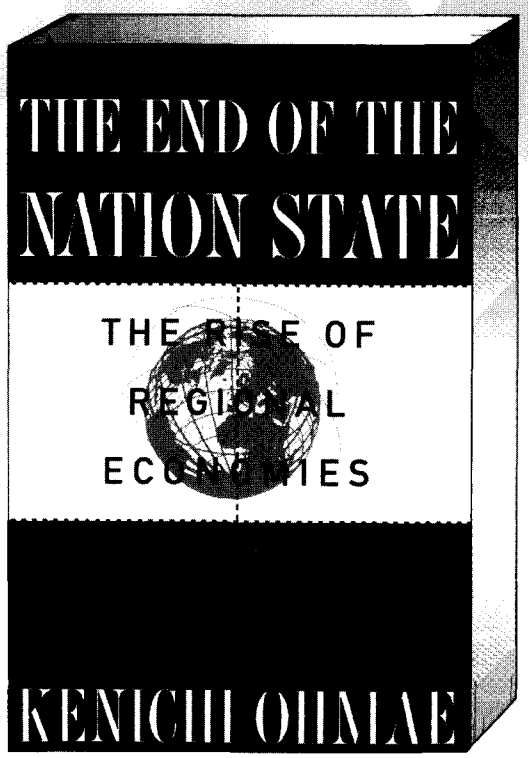

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AUTOMATIC PILOT

By Michael Lewis

"I will then stand before you without office or authority, a private citizen, a Kansan, an American, just a man."
—Bob Dole on May 15.

May 27:

You never saw a more unhappy looking group than the journalists assigned to follow Dole into New Jersey on Memorial Day. "I got the best seat in the house to the worst show in town," grumbles a cameraman as we board the plane at National Airport. "I just came in case he got shot or something," says a reporter, who doesn't even bother to take notes. I, too, have my misgivings. Usually my campaign notebooks are crammed with anecdotes, observations and incidents. Whenever I'm with Dole, however, they simply refuse to fill up. The Dole campaign remains an arid, sterile place. Not much grows there.

Today is a kind of prelude to the general campaign, which will be relaunched in earnest tomorrow with a bold journey across the country. Dole marches for a dozen blocks through Clifton in front of the parade's single float, bookended by his wife, Elizabeth, and Governor Christie Todd Whitman. The crowd is quiet and sparse, less than one-deep. The parade climaxes in a park, where Dole is meant to make a few remarks and lay a wreath on a symbolic gravesite. I wait there for him, watching members of the local veterans' organization subtly jockey for position. Six old men form the color guard, dressed in red jackets, VFW caps covered with patches and buttons, and the apprehensive air of people who fear they might be asked to improvise. But the really striking thing about them is how old they look compared to Dole—they could almost be a different generation. "Any veterans of the First World War here?" I ask. "We just buried our last one last fall," says one, who sports a POW-MIA pin in his cap. "Don't come around ten years from now," says the man beside him, "or we won't be here either."

As Dole approaches, a dozen more veterans with flags plead with the police to let them into the sacred space occupied by the color guard. "Where we gonna stand, Billy?" a veteran on the outside shouts to a veteran on the inside. "I'll get ahold of Eddie," says Billy. Two minutes later Billy returns. "Eddie says no," he says, with an apologetic shrug. "I dunno. For me, I'd let another member in." The plaintiff returns with a heavily decorated man in a blue uniform, white gloves and a white pith helmet. The others call him "general"—though of what I have no idea. He wears no medals or insignias. "The police say no, general," Billy explains to him. "You got to be kidding," says the general, huffily. "Send one over to me. A *female*."

After the ensuing scuffle—in which the general comes out ahead—I notice three very old men shuffling their feet at the back of the swelling crowd. The closer I get the more evidence of valor I see: purple hearts, bronze stars and enough other medals to fill a helmet. "During the war we was at the front," says the one with the largest medal around his neck. "During the parade we're at the back." He points up at Dole, now ascending the bandstand. "I think if he knew that there was a contingent of purple hearts here he'd be different."

It was a nice illustration of a rule of military glory: the more of it you actually have the less you are inclined to debase it for calculated advantage by, say, bullying the police into letting you into the winner's circle. This man with the medal, Jim di Stefano, has a picture of Dole, taken in Normandy two years ago during the D-Day celebrations. It emerges that one reason he is willing to speak to me is that he hopes I might have Dole sign it for him. "You see how his face stands out," he says, pointing at the platform. "Even in a picture of 100 people, his face just stands out."

"You could almost call it majestic," says one of his companions, who lost an eye in Korea.

The day ends at a family picnic to which the Doles have been invited. Maybe 300 people swarm in the street outside the middle-class home. "All those people coming for dinner?" Dole asks his hostess, motioning to the mob scene on the leafy streets.

"No," she laughs.

"Good," he says. "You'd be wiped out."

May 28-30:

It turns out that we are flying all the way across the country to spend less than twenty-four hours in California before picking up and flying back—first to Chicago,

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Science itself has become an economic resource. Beyond new "hardware", there is global demand for the "software" of innovative ideas and concepts. Even countries lacking in natural or industrial wealth can achieve economic strength through scientific knowledge.

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where we'll spend tomorrow night, and then to Ohio. On May 28! Five months before the election! The only reason it doesn't seem insane is that several hundred seemingly sober men in dark suits follow Dole wherever he goes. But the trip has a familiar delusional quality about it.

There is a kind of ambitious young person who mistakes frenetic movement for advancement in the world. He'll call you from the road and say, "I'm in Bangladesh on business, heading for Iceland," and you know that he thinks this is sufficient explanation of his purpose in life. The Dole campaign has something of this feeling. As long as the candidate keeps moving, everyone traveling with him is exempt from serious self-examination, which is a shame, since they have no idea why they are doing what they are doing. It's frequent flier politics. And within a couple of hours I'm having my first Admiral Stockdale moment: *Who am I? What am I doing here?*

The first day is a perfect blur. Sometimes I'm close to Dole; more commonly I stand outside in the street while he does his thing in the presence of a few selected cameras and journalists. But no matter how close I get, the man remains inaccessible. I sneak up on him backstage before a political rally in Ontario, California, where he is standing with Governor Pete Wilson, Attorney General Dan Lungren (who might as well be wearing a sign that says, "Please Make Me Your Vice President") and a pair of congressmen. One by one the "celebrities" (as the master of ceremonies calls them) run onto the stage, leaving Dole all alone. The emcee is introducing him; the crowd is getting worked up. "You nervous yet?" I whisper into his right ear.

He jumps slightly, and turns, then reflexively sticks out his left hand for me to shake. "Not yet!" he says cheerily. The man has no idea who I am or what I am doing backstage, whispering in his right ear. He never asks. The guard, the perfect flatness, never drops—except on those rare occasions when his native wit gets the better of him.

Early the second morning we descend, in our motorcade of thirteen cars and two buses, on a seemingly tranquil park in Redondo Beach. The point of the event—and the trip—is to illustrate that Dole is against crime. The trouble is that Clinton is against crime, too. So Dole needs to show that he's more fervently against crime than Clinton, who at this very moment is en route to New Orleans to deliver his own anti-crime speech. (Dole and Clinton are like *Time* and *Newsweek*. No matter how much they claim to differ, they still run the same covers week after week.)

The park is being celebrated as an example of a neighborhood reclaiming its public space from urban marauders. But on stage, as various dignitaries disapprove of drive-by shootings, a small group of dissenters forms on the fringe. All but one are the Hispanics who bear the brunt of the new anti-crime esprit. (They're hauled off to jail for all sorts of odd crimes—carrying baseball bats into the park after seven o'clock in the evening, for instance.) The exception is a gentle old soul named Art Campell, who for decades has cleaned the park, coached the local kids and groomed the playing fields. The ball field at the center of the park is named for him.

Art Campell is a Dole supporter—"I'm for the man; I don't go by the party"—but he's mildly perplexed by the anti-crime rally. "It isn't as bad as all that," he says, as Pete Wilson takes the microphone to praise the parents who have formed the neighborhood watch organization and to denounce "gang-bangers," which to my ears sounds a bit off-color. A policeman on the scene confirms that crime statistics in Redondo Beach are in line with those of the nation as a whole: violent crime has declined steadily here as it has in other cities over the past twenty years. More to the point, he cannot recall a single violent crime in the park. A few years ago someone shot a gun in the air as he drove past the park, he says, but no one was hurt. Campell stops the park custodian, a Hispanic man who speaks poor English. "Do you think this Dole thing is a good idea?" he asks the man. The man takes one look at my notepad and says, "I no want to say." He's afraid of offending his employers. The greatest fear in the park is the fear of offending the people on the platform who are spearheading the anti-crime initiative.

Having successfully fed (and fed off of) the fear of crime, we wearily board the bus. I am now certain that nothing interesting will ever occur in the close-cropped frame of the staged Dole event. Where do politics come from, anyway? Not from listening to Bob Dole deliver a speech written by someone else to a group of people he knows nothing about in a place to which he will never return.

As I stare out the window, a flier lands lightly on my lap. I look up and find a middle-aged Hispanic man with a Frito Bandito mustache smiling at me. I take up his flier. It is a religious tract done up as a tabloid newspaper. The headline is an apparently fresh, direct quote from Jesus Christ. "'Russia plans to invade the United States with missiles'—Jesus." It is as plausible as anything I've heard today.

Many of the criticisms about Dole can be made about Clinton, too, of course. You can't say anything about Dole's use of push polls, or about the cynicism of his staged events, without having some seasoned reporter look at you as if you were a child and say, "So what? They all do that." The next week, *The New York Times* will carry a putatively positive piece about Dole's campaign manager, Scott Reed. Toward the end of it, almost by-the-by, we read this astonishing revelation: "The element of surprise (in Dole's Senate resignation) was essential, Mr. Dole and Reed decided, if the announcement were to appear bold and make an impression on voters. 'If it had leaked,' Mr. Reed said, 'he probably wouldn't have done it.' " Think of it! Just a few weeks ago the man stood before us and brought tears to our eyes saying that "you do not lay claim to the office you hold, it lays claim to you. Your obligation is to bring to it the gifts you can of labor and hon-

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Disengaged Students

Most people agree that the school reform movement has not succeeded in finding the answer to poor student achievement. A new book, *Beyond the Classroom,* contends that it never will if we insist on looking only at what schools do—or don't do—and ignore the part that students and their attitudes and values play in the equation.

But the first order of business for author Laurence Steinberg, a professor of developmental psychology at Temple University, and his coauthors, professors B. Bradford Brown of the University of Wisconsin and Sanford M. Dornbusch of Stanford, is to demolish the claims of school reform critics who say we don't really have any problems with student achievement. According to education reform "revisionists" like David Berliner, Bruce Biddle, and Gerald Bracey, declining test scores are just a myth and the poor performance of U.S. students in international comparisons is a statistical freak. They say there is nothing wrong with the achievement of our students—or if there is, it is mainly poor minority students who are in trouble.

Many students say they go to school to hang out with their friends.

This kind of stuff is being well received by educators all over the country who are tired of hearing bad news, but Steinberg and his collaborators give it the short shrift it deserves. They point out that SAT scores dropped for everyone—not just poor, minority kids—and NAEP scores remain flat. Furthermore, scandalously few students achieve top NAEP levels, which are not very demanding—including middle class students, who are supposed to be doing just fine. As for the international comparisons of student achievement, Steinberg, Brown, and Dornbusch say they reveal once again the relative weakness of our high-achieving students:

> Comparisons of even our *best* students with those from other nations are discouraging. Indeed, in mathematics and science, our top students know less than students in other industrialized countries who are considered merely average by their countries' standards.

But *Beyond the Classroom*'s main argument is with people who say that poor student achievement is chiefly—or even entirely—the fault of the schools. Believing that student attitudes are bound to influence student performance, Steinberg and his colleagues administered questionnaires to 20,000 students over a three-year period to get a detailed picture of students' values and their lives, inside and outside of school. The sample mirrored the general population, with 40 percent of the students drawn from ethnic minorities. The researchers also conducted focus groups and individual interviews with 600 students and 500 sets of parents.

Steinberg and his colleagues found that there is a pervasive pressure for students to do the minimum necessary to get by. As they put it, "Not only is there little room in most schools for the academically oriented, there is substantial peer pressure on students to underachieve." Students reported that they were afraid to try to do a good job in school for fear of what their friends would think, and they said their friends laughed at students who worked hard. Academic achievement was so little valued that when asked which crowd they would like to be part of, many more students chose the "druggies" (one in six) than the "brains" (one in ten). The brains didn't think much of their position, either; half wished they were in a different crowd.

As a result, many students said they go to school to hang out with their friends and "do not take school, or their studies, seriously." Their out-of-school activities mirror their in-school attitudes. Homework? Students spend, on average, four hours per week on it. (Compare this with four hours per day spent by students in other industrialized democracies.) And half of those questioned said they don't bother with homework assignments at all. Few read for pleasure, but two-thirds have after-school jobs involving more than 15 hours a week. To compensate, many said they take easier classes; others admitted to being so tired that they were unable to do their schoolwork.

As far as students can see, their attitudes toward academic achievement are right in line with those of the adult world. Students believe that their parents are largely indifferent to how well their children do in school. And they can't help but get that message from most colleges and employers. Are the schools blameless? Of course not. But as this book makes clear, it is absurd and dangerous to hold the schools entirely responsible. As long as we do, we will be not be able to see the problem clearly—or find its remedy.

These comments only scratch the surface of *Beyond the Classroom*. The discussion on ethnicity and achievement, which pulls together many of the book's themes, is particularly valuable. So are the suggestions about what we should do to deal with the problem of student disengagement. I'll return to them in a later column.

Beyond the Classroom was published by Simon and Schuster on June 4.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1996 by Albert Shanker.

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esty, and then depart with grace." But according to Reed, Dole's decision to end his wonderful Senate career was baldly conceived as a p.r. stunt. Journalists are often accused of being cynical, but the cynicism of journalists does not compare to that of serious presidential candidates.

On the plane heading back East I look up and take a mental photograph. A wise old man once told me how to do this: look hard, close your eyes, try to recall what you have seen. Repeat this procedure three times and you'll always remember the picture. In my mental picture, a Dole aide is standing in the aisle in front of me reading a copy of *Premiere* magazine. Behind him is a series of partitions dividing the plane into classes and decorated with photos of Dole: one in Kansas of him announcing his most recent presidential run, another in silhouette with a soldier behind him, standing at attention. Seated to the left of *Premiere* magazine, a reporter is reading *Primary Colors.* Behind me sits Joe Klein, looking innocent. Behind Joe sits somebody else reading *Primary Colors.*

Before the picture is fully developed—between the second and third blinks—Nelson Warfield, Dole's press secretary, barges into the frame. He leans over us with a mixture of real and contrived self-assurance, pretending to treat journalists as his equals, but unable to prevent himself from condescending a bit. Nelson's status problem is the status problem of everyone who ever ascended to a high position in a political campaign. If Dole wins, he will be a Washington bigshot entitled to condescend even to important journalists; if Dole loses he'll be a nobody. An authentic concern underpins his egalitarian pose.

Soon Nelson is engaged in heartfelt discussion with the TV people. It is so much more animated than any other conversation between Dole staffers—or Dole—and the press that I can't help but wonder what they're talking about. It turns out that the television people are upset with the Dole campaign for not providing them with an "establishing shot"—the image that leads each TV piece. They need something that says to the viewers: Dole For President. As long as Dole remained in the Senate the camera would pan the Capitol. Now they have nothing to shoot.

June 1:

In times of crisis one must respond in kind. One must adopt a radical strategy. And I do. "I'm glad they are all fucking boring," says Morry Taylor when I call him to see what he's up to, "because I'm fucking going wild these days." Before we finish speaking he indicates that he, too, has gone sour on the Dole campaign. ("He's got to throw these advisers away and step up to the plate.") He doesn't exactly regret his endorsement of Dole. But he thinks that Dole is doomed. This realization has led to his newfound desire to pen a manifesto—a tract that explains what is wrong with America and how to fix it. More precisely, Morry wants someone else to write a manifesto for him. "How fast can you write a book?" he asks. •

Dr. Kevorkian's woman problem.

DEATH AND THE MAIDEN

By Stephanie Gutmann

Who would use the services of the right-to-die movement's death assisters? If suicide were "medicalized," if there were a death dispenser in every neighborhood staffed with a knowledgeable, certified facilitator, what kind of person would partake? What, in psychologists' jargon, would be his "presenting problem?" And just what kind of assistance would the physician in the physician-assisted suicide really supply?

For a preview of that brave new landscape, there is no better place to look than at the record being so industriously compiled by Dr. Jack Kevorkian, Royal Oak, Michigan's notorious "Dr. Death." The enterprising pathologist has been at it for six years and has, at this writing, assisted twenty-eight suicides—though only his ever-present lawyer knows when and where he will surface next, schlepping the bottles and tubes of the Rube Goldbergian death equipment he calls the "Thanatron" or, more recently, the "Mercitron."

In the absence of competitors, Kevorkian has attracted a broad spectrum of people seeking a physician-assisted way out. They have come from the proverbial all walks of life, from the trailer park and the manicured suburb. In many respects, the doctor's clients represent a pretty good sample of the general population. Except for the fact that most of them are women.

Like the men, they are younger than you might expect—ranging from age 40 to early 80s—with a surpris-

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ing number (or perhaps not so surprising, given mid-life crises, menopause, empty nests) in their 50s. The most striking fact about the field, though, is how much what one might call the "objective despair index" differs by sex. Most of Kevorkian's men were declared terminally ill by their own doctors; they were in constant, severe pain from medically diagnosed causes and were often physically incapacitated. Whatever you think about suicide or physician-assisted suicide, these were easier calls.

Many of the women, on the other hand, had more ambiguous complaints: in a chart like the one compiled by Kalman Kaplan, director of the Suicide Research Center at Columbia-Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago, we see that most of the Kevorkian women were not diagnosed terminal and had not been complaining of severe or constant pain. We see conditions like breast cancer (for which there is now great hope), emphysema, rheumatoid arthritis and Alzheimer's (a condition that usually burdens relatives more than the people who have it). Reading the case histories it is clear that many of these women's lives were messy and unattractive. But in all-too-typical female fashion, the patient often seems to have been most worried about the disease's impact on others. Is it possible that a certain type of woman—depressive, self-effacing, near the end of a life largely spent serving others—is particularly vulnerable to the "rational," "heroic" solution so forcefully proposed by Dr. Death?

DR. JACK KEVORKIAN BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Kevorkian is far too media-savvy to have been sanguine for long about his disproportionate number of female patients. As the deaths of his first eight women clients were registered and charges of misogyny started ringing from the editorial pages, he began, in his fashion, to make his oeuvre look more like America. The number of men grew as the work progressed, finally bringing the total to eleven. But even with the added effort to diversify, one problem remains: Kevorkian seems to like to feint and bobble, to flirt and play coy with his clients. Some of this tendency stems from his problems finding appropriate venues for medicides and from his responsible attempts to make sure patients have explored the range of treatments. But much of it seems to have come out of Dr. K's pleasure in the process, in playing God. The upshot is that many of Kevorkian's male prospective clients had already killed themselves by the time Kevorkian got around to "setting the date."

Kevorkian's experience with men is mirrored in suicide records from the National Center for Health Statistics. Women attempt suicide three times more often than men, according to the center. The reason we end up with far more completed male suicides—24,000 men to 6,000 women in 1992—is that men generally seem determined to succeed. They blow their heads off and throw themselves off buildings. Women tend to take overdoses of pills. Sexist as it may sound, women's suicide attempts are more like the classic "cry for help"—a perverse way of reaching out, of bringing people to the bedside and hands to the body.

Some social scientists have even noticed an erotic component to aging women's fantasies and unconscious feelings about death. Administering TAT (Thematic Apperception Test) card tests to terminally ill women in their 60s, Harvard University's David McClelland found a recurring figure in the stories the women told to explain the ambiguous situations pictured in the cards. McClelland called this figure "the harlequin"—enigmatic, seductive but dangerous—and he concluded from other contextual comments that the harlequin represented death. In men's imagery, death is more often represented by big, all-encompassing things like the ocean. What this suggests is that for women death is a more social affair; if it is given a human face by a soothing physician/assister there is all the more reason why the super-altruistic woman with a life spent serving others would want to put down her burdens, and succumb.

Hence the basis of the Kevorkian charm. Affable, worldly, Dr. Jack made death into a prize—frequently he toyed with his clients, telling them they "were not ready," then finally relented, all the while lacing the interaction with rousing messianic language. (Why did he assist his first client in a rusty van in a parking lot? asked prosecutors. "One reason for that," snarled Dr. K. "No Room At The Inn." So what if the van he used was dilapidated, Kevorkian would say, "The savior of a major fraction of mankind was born in the most abject condi-

continued on page 24

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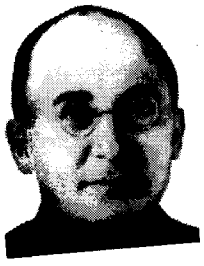

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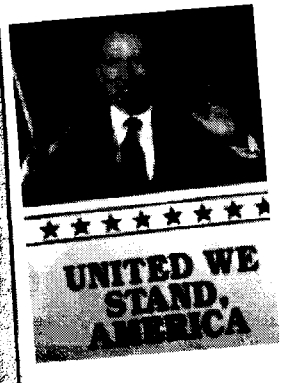

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tions possible.... It's all I could do. I'm alone ... a formidable mind in the Dark Ages.")

Janet Adkins, Kevorkian's first client, certainly got many such pep talks from Dr. K, and the ringing language, the formality, the jargon, the bureaucracy (even the concept of death-by-machine), must have been very attractive to a woman who seems to have spent her life attempting to be perfect. Adkins—who lived with her stockbroker husband in an affluent Oregon suburb—is one of Kevorkian's most curious and disturbing cases, a key example of the ambiguous female case. (Initially Kevorkian was charged with Adkins's murder, but the prosecution ran out of steam, in part, I am convinced, because of quasi-feminist arguments that it was patronizing to question whether Adkins "knew her own mind.")

Adkins—whose case is well documented in *Appointment With Dr. Death*, a fascinating book by former Detroit *Free Press* reporter Michael Betzold—certainly looked the part of a strong, willful woman. Though she didn't have a full-time career, she raised three successful sons, climbed Mount Hood, went hang gliding and generally behaved like a cyclone of energy, according to neighbors. At 54 she found herself forgetting things. Her husband complained to Dr. K that he had to remind her of the times of her tennis lessons and that she "kept leaving her purse in the house."

"These are things that keep slipping away," said Ron Adkins, who made the first contact with Kevorkian after reading about him in *Newsweek*, who then played liaison throughout the logistical discussions, and who appears to have answered for Janet throughout the pre-death conference with Kevorkian. Doctors at a Portland hospital told her that eventually—Alzheimer's can take around fifteen years to fully develop—she would be dependent on her husband for feeding and bathing. Setting the date for November 30, 1989—so she "wouldn't spoil Christmas for the kids"—she made plans to go. Though she was still able to carry on clear conversations and demolish her son at tennis, her husband explained that "if she was going to err she'd rather err on the side of going too soon rather than too late."

The week before she died (with the date now pushed forward to June), "Janet selected the music and the readings for the memorial service," writes Betzold. She "arranged for a therapist to mediate final 'closure' sessions with her family." The night before her death she stayed up past midnight in a restaurant with friends, and rhapsodized about Bach with Dr. K.

So many things are worrisome about Adkins's death: Alzheimer's is notoriously hard to diagnose, for one. Only an autopsy finally confirms it, and its early symptoms—confusion, clumsiness, memory problems—are identical to those of moderate to severe depression. It's chilling to think that perhaps Dr. Kevorkian merely colluded with a suburban Super Mom's Stepfordism. Most chilling of all, though, is the barrenness, the loneliness of the whole affair. One wonders if, in the midst of the meticulous death planning—while she was listening to her husband's oh-so-rational, oh-so-progressive, oh-so-unpatronizing wish that she just "do what's right for her"—Janet Adkins might have longed for someone to show a tiny wisp of passion about whether or not she stuck around.

If we can trust Dr. K's perceptions, there was a tiny wisp of passion, a calling card from the harlequin, while Janet Adkins lay, hooked to the Thanatron, on a cot in the back of Kevorkian's VW van. As the EKG flattened: "Her eyelids flickered a little," Kevorkian told Ron Rosenbaum, who covered the story for *Vanity Fair*, "and she looked like she was rising up to almost kiss me. I leaned over and the first thing that came to mind is to say, 'Have a nice trip.' That's all. 'Have a nice trip.' Those were the last words said."

For his next medicide Kevorkian promised Sherry Miller and Marjorie Wantz "a beautiful setting on a little lake in a little woods." When the group—Kevorkian's entourage, Wantz's husband, Miller's best friend—convened at a state park near Detroit, they found production values worthy of a Hemlock Society self-deliverance brochure. The only false note in the bucolic scene (complete with rustic cabin, candles and last-minute exchanges of endearments) are the confused motives of the two middle-aged women involved. Both cases are as troubling in their own way as Adkins's: one woman seems to have been suffering from depression rather than organic disease, and the other from a particularly self-abnegating sense of the trouble her disease caused others.

Wantz, 58, had suffered from pelvic pain ever since a 1988 operation to remove non-cancerous growths from inside her vagina. Though she had many vivid explanations for her torments—third-degree burns, a needle left behind after the surgery—doctor after doctor could find no organic cause for them. At various times, she was diagnosed with "major depression" and "somatization syndrome," for which doctors prescribed antidepressants and even psychiatric hospitalization. Wantz turned these down, requesting a spinal cord severment (to end the pain), and, failing that, medicide with Dr. K, followed by an "extremely, extremely thorough autopsy" in which, she stipulated, she would have to "be cut, like, ten ways." An autopsy cited by the Oakland County prosecutor's office found nothing wrong.

Sherry Miller, who died the same day on the cot next to Wantz, was also roiled by powerful emotions—above all, one would assume, rage at the husband who had divorced her and taken her children just as her multiple sclerosis had worsened. But at 43, confined to a wheelchair and living with her elderly parents, Miller hardly discussed the recent divorce, Betzold writes, and "never spoke a word of blame." Instead she focused her formidible energies on persuading Dr. Kevorkian to help her die.

At one of Kevorkian's trials, in a cross-examination conducted by assistant prosecutor Michael Modelski, Miller said she was worried about her elderly parents and beginning to realize she would have to move to Texas to

continued on page 28

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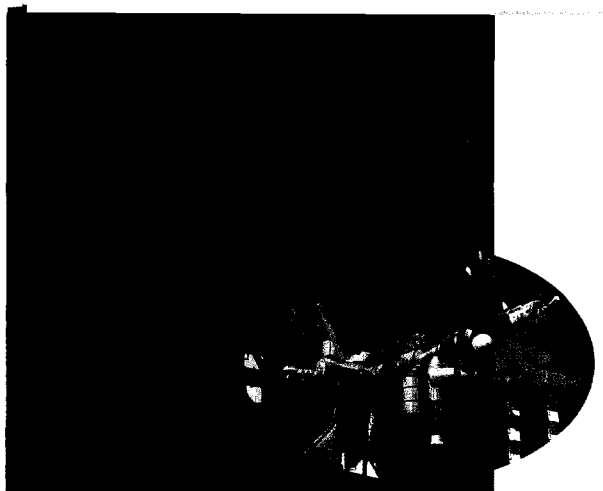

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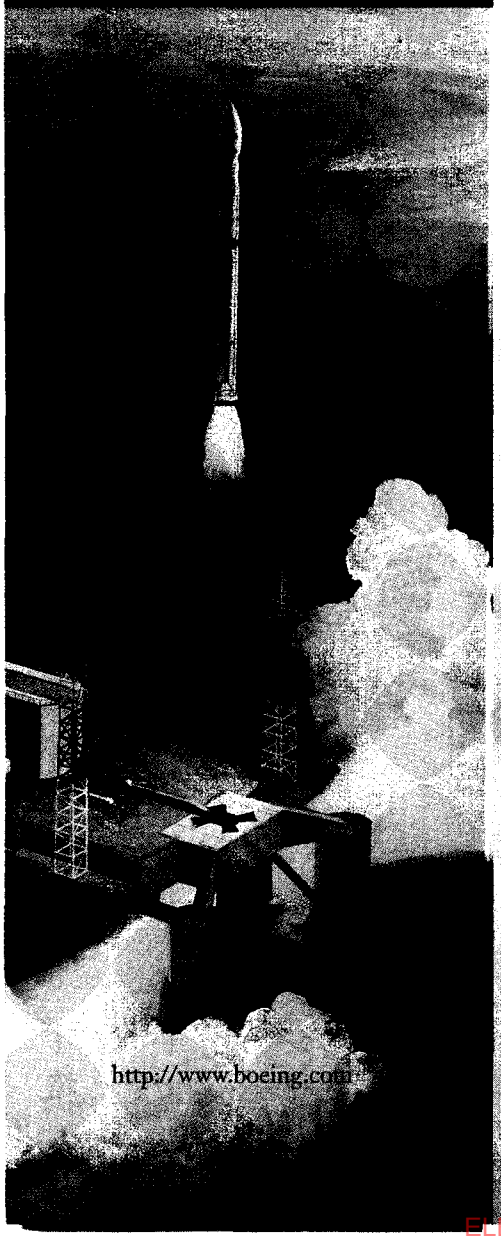

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be cared for by relatives there. "In that context I asked her if it wasn't that she thought she was going to be a burden on others whether she would want to die. There was a long pause," Modelski recalls, "and she said, 'Well, I can't really deal with ifs.' "

"Not being a bother" seemed to preoccupy Miller: During the detailed, pre-death conferences with Kevorkian, she became "very quiet," Betzold wrote. Her best friend "knelt down by her and said: 'It will be OK.' [Miller] started crying. 'I just don't want all this fuss,' she said."

STEPHANIE GUTMANN is a writer living in New York.

Profiles in judicial overkill.

WHAT RIGHT TO DIE?

By Jeffrey Rosen

It's hard not to be moved by emotional accounts of how laws prohibiting assisted suicide can drive pain-wracked people to desperate ends. A year ago, in *The New Yorker*, Andrew Solomon wrote eloquently about how he and his brother helped their mother take sleeping pills to spare her the final agonies of ovarian cancer, an ordeal made even more harrowing by the fear of prosecution. All of the jurors who acquitted Dr. Jack Kevorkian in May similarly said they were influenced by videotapes in which two women suffering from chronic pain described their anguish and pleaded to be allowed to die. (The jurors were unmoved by the fact that the ailments were not fatal.) Confronted with heartbreaking stories like these, it's tempting to conclude that all laws barring competent citizens from dying with dignity should be repealed or invalidated. And, indeed, when two federal appeals courts, during the past few months, struck down state laws in New York and Washington prohibiting physician-assisted suicide, the judges were widely praised for their statesmanship and humanity.

But, in fact, the judicial discovery of a sweeping constitutional right to die is analytically unconvincing and politically indefensible. The recent decisions rely heavily on the similarities between abortion and euthanasia, both of which, to use Ronald Dworkin's typically abstract formulation, involve "choices for death." Both euthanasia and abortion inspire profound religious and moral disputes; both have been, at certain times in American history, prohibited by the states; and the case for each becomes more or less compelling at different points in the life cycle. But creating constitutional rights by analogy is often treacherous, as the Supreme Court discovered in the wake of *Roe* v. *Wade*, when it was witheringly criticized for expanding its earlier cases concerning the privacy of the marital bedroom into an apparently unrelated right of doctors to perform first-trimester abortions in hospitals. By blithely repeating the errors of *Roe*, and expanding the narrow right to refuse unwanted medical treatment into a much broader right to hasten one's own death, the recent assisted suicide decisions show the dangers of constitutional abstraction. What follows is a narrative of how a constitutional right is invented.

Until the judicial decisions earlier this year, America's euthanasia debate was organized around a series of carefully maintained distinctions. The most basic right, now recognized by the Supreme Court, Congress and the state legislatures, is the right to refuse unwanted medical treatment, such as feeding tubes and hydration. Less widely accepted is assisted suicide, still criminal in thirty-four states, which occurs when a doctor prescribes medication that may ease pain *or* cause death (the double effect), and the patient administers the lethal dose himself. Most controversial is "voluntary passive euthanasia," which takes place when the doctor, rather than the incapacitated patient, administers the lethal dose with the patient's consent.

Last March, in San Francisco, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit impatiently swept aside these painstaking distinctions and became the first federal appeals court in the country to recognize a constitutional right to "determine the time and manner of one's own death." Writing for eight members of the Court, Judge Stephen Reinhardt struck down a Washington state law prohibiting physician-assisted suicide, and draped himself in Justice Blackmun's mantle. "In deciding right-to-die cases, we are guided by the Court's approach to the abortion cases," he declared, and proceeded to discover a constitutional right to die in the interstices of the Constitution's due process clause.

Judge Reinhardt's grandiloquent opinion is a marvel of activism in the old style. It brings to mind a Fourth of July oration by a Victorian dignitary: long, strenuous, delivered at full volume, and ostentatiously ornamented with shows of learning. "Like the Court in *Roe*," he intones, "we begin with ancient attitudes"; he then

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delivers a leisurely disquisition on views of suicide in classical literature and mythology from Greek and Roman times to our own. ("The first of all literary suicides, that of Oedipus's mother, Jocasta, is made to seem praiseworthy," Reinhardt notes helpfully. "Hundreds of Jews killed themselves at Masada in order to avoid being captured by Roman legions.") In the space of several pages, Reinhardt also manages to quote St. Augustine, Bracton and King Lear. ("Vex not his ghost. O, let him pass! He hates him / That would upon the rack of this tough world / Stretch him out longer.") By the end of the opinion, we know just how Lear feels.

Reinhardt's constitutional analysis, however, is less weighty. First, he invokes the Supreme Court's 1990 *Cruzan* opinion, in which the parents of Nancy Cruzan, a patient in a persistent vegetative state, sought to remove her feeding tube, even though the patient herself had not left a living will. Chief Justice Rehnquist assumed, for the sake of argument, that competent people have a "constitutionally-protected liberty interest in refusing unwanted medical treatment." But Rehnquist held that a state could require convincing evidence of a patient's wishes before requiring hospitals to pull the plug.

By recognizing a right to refuse medical treatment, Judge Reinhardt suggests expansively, the Supreme Court "necessarily recognize[d] a liberty interest in hastening one's own death." But in fact the Supreme Court did no such thing. The Court emphasized that each state has an "unqualified interest in the preservation of human life," and to illustrate this point, it noted that "the majority of states in this country have laws imposing criminal penalties on one who assists another to commit suicide." Far from questioning these laws, the Supreme Court explicitly appeared to endorse them.

The Supreme Court's distinction between refusing treatment and committing assisted suicide, between killing and letting die, is analytically coherent and nationally accepted. (In 1990, Congress codified the right to refuse medical treatment in the Federal Patient Self-Determination Act.) A long line of cases say that patients have a right to be protected against unwanted physical contact from doctors, which can be seen as a kind of violent battery or a violation of the principle of informed consent. Hooking people up to tubes against their will might also be seen as an unreasonable search or seizure of the body, prohibited by the Fourth Amendment. By contrast, a patient who wants to commit assisted suicide is not seeking to have a feeding tube withdrawn, but to have lethal medication applied. Prohibiting doctors from actively killing can hardly be considered as a bodily seizure or a battery.

Perhaps recognizing the inadequacy of the *Cruzan* case as a fountainhead for his broad right to die, Reinhardt turns to the abortion cases. But, even on its own terms, Reinhardt's analogy between abortion and assisted suicide is implausible. The cases from which *Roe* v. *Wade* derived a constitutional right to abortion involved reproductive autonomy or marital privacy. All have been reconceived, in the years since *Roe*, as cases involving gender discrimination and the special burdens suffered by women during unwanted pregnancy. But the right to die has no logical connection to sexual autonomy or gender equality.

The only way Reinhardt can sustain his analogy between abortion and euthanasia is by characterizing the sexual privacy cases at the highest possible level of generalization: "A common thread running through these [abortion and contraception] cases is that they involve decisions that are highly personal and intimate, as well as of great importance to the individual. Certainly, few decisions are more personal, intimate, or important than the decision to end one's life, especially when the reason for doing so is to avoid excessive and protracted pain." But this analogy is too slippery to be convincing. For some citizens, no decision is more "personal, intimate, or important" than the decision to engage in homosexual conduct; but this choice, according to the Supreme Court, is not one the Constitution protects. And it's hard to imagine a democracy that would authorize judges to invent fundamental rights guided by nothing more than their own estimation of which decisions are "personal, intimate, or important."

Reinhardt quotes a passage from *Planned Parenthood* v. *Casey*, the 1992 abortion case: "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life." This doesn't help matters. Taken out of context, as Judge Robert Beezer emphasized dryly in dissent, the right to define one's own concept of existence "is so broad and melodramatic as to seem almost comical in its rhetorical flourish." But Reinhardt skirted over the preceding sentences in *Casey*, which emphasize that "our law affords constitutional protection to personal decisions relating to marriage, procreation, contraception, family relationships, child rearing, and education." Decisions about death are a different matter.

The unbounded quality of Reinhardt's "right to hasten one's own death" is the best reason to reject it. In a series of prescient articles written since 1958, Yale Kamisar of the University of Michigan has argued convincingly that courts should decline to expand the narrow right to refuse unwanted medical treatment into a broader right to control the timing of one's own death, because the broader right has no logical stopping point. And Reinhardt's opinion vindicates Kamisar's most dramatic fears. Isn't a healthy but depressed person's decision to commit suicide just as "personal, intimate, or important" as a decision to commit suicide near the end of an incurable illness? Wouldn't the right to define "one's own concept of existence" protect the right of all citizens to kill themselves, for whatever reasons they please? Reinhardt anxiously denies that he means to endorse a right of active voluntary euthanasia, but his "liberty interest" has no principled limits.

A month after Judge Reinhardt struck down Washington state's law prohibiting assisted suicide, three judges on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit struck down New York state's assisted suicide law. The New York judges went

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out of their way to repudiate the reasoning of Judge Reinhardt's opinion, which they found open-ended and unconvincing. But they reached the same result for different reasons. The majority opinion, written by Judge Roger Miner, held that New York denies its citizens the equal protection of the laws, because it fails to "treat equally all competent persons who are in the final stages of fatal illness and wish to hasten their deaths." By allowing terminally ill patients on life support to refuse unwanted medical treatment, but prohibiting terminally ill patients who are *not* on life support to "hasten their deaths" with the aid of their physicians, New York, according to Judge Miner, fails to treat "similarly circumstanced persons alike."

Judge Miner's theory raises the specter of the slippery slope even more alarmingly than Judge Reinhardt's theory. As Yale Kamisar pointed out in testimony before the House Judiciary Committee at the end of April, if people *off* life support have to be treated as if they are "similarly circumstanced," to use Miner's jargon, to people *on* life support, why aren't patients who want to kill themselves with prescription drugs "similarly circumstanced" to patients who want to be strangled by their doctors? And how can this right be confined to the terminally ill? If New York has a duty to "treat equally all competent people who are in the final stages of fatal illness and wish to hasten their deaths," to use Miner's words again, isn't Kamisar correct that it would be similarly arbitrary to exclude people who suffer from Alzheimer's, severe depression or even arthritis?

There are good reasons, of course, why it was perfectly rational for the New York legislature to maintain the legal distinction between passively allowing a patient to die (which is permitted) and actively assisting in a patient's death (which is prohibited). As George Fletcher has argued, the distinction between action and omission is supported by the general reluctance, in American law, to hold people liable for their failure to prevent harm. And there's a broad medical, legal and philosophical consensus that stopping treatment should be considered not an action to kill but an omission to cure. Viewed in this light, assisted suicide violates the doctor's duty to avoid killing, while letting a patient die does not.

The New York case concludes with a concurring opinion by Judge Guido Calabresi. Of the three arguments for striking down assisted suicide laws, Calabresi's is the most modest and, on its face, the most plausible. As a Yale law professor in 1981, Calabresi had written an important book suggesting that courts could avoid some of the hazards of judicial activism by asking legislatures to take a "second look" at archaic statutes whose original purposes and popular support seemed to have eroded over time. Drawing extensively on his book, Judge Calabresi argues that the original rationales for New York's assisted suicide laws, like Connecticut's anti-abortion laws, are no longer widely accepted. In the nineteenth century, suicide and attempted suicide were both crimes in New York, and assisting someone to commit the crime of suicide was, accordingly, a crime as well. But, in 1919, the New York legislature repealed the criminal punishments for suicide and attempted suicide, while leaving in place the punishments for assisted suicide.

It's at least arguable, Calabresi suggests, that the assisted suicide ban survived as an oversight; and perhaps it no longer commands the support of New York legislators, now that its original purposes have been lost in the mists of time. By voting to strike down the assisted suicide law, Calabresi suggests, he wants to force the New York legislature to go before the people and to defend the ban openly, rather than relying, by inertia, on archaic premises.

Calabresi's theory is ingenious; but his historical narrative is selective and, ultimately, unconvincing. In fact, the New York legislature, like most other statute legislatures, made a series of deliberate and self-conscious decisions, over many decades, to retain the ban on assisted suicide, long after the decision to decriminalize suicide itself. As the dissenting judge in the California case noted, the reason most states abandoned civil and criminal penalties for suicide during the nineteenth century had nothing to do with a desire to exalt individual autonomy, or to remove social stigma from an act that was still considered reprehensible. Instead, legislatures were increasingly reluctant to punish the suicide's innocent family, and increasingly doubtful that criminal punishment was a very sensible way of deterring an act that came to be seen as a result of mental illness. But no state suggested that there was a "right" to commit suicide, or that people shouldn't be deterred from helping *others* commit it. On the contrary, after long debates in the 1950s, the Model Penal Code, the main text in criminal law teaching, concluded in 1962 that neither suicide nor attempted suicide should be a crime, but that aiding or soliciting another person to commit suicide *should* be a felony.

The New York state legislature was obviously influenced by the Model Penal Code in 1965, when it removed the nineteenth-century declaration that suicide was a "grave public wrong" but refused to remove the prohibition on assisted suicide. New York made its intentions even clearer in 1990, when the legislature codified the right to refuse unwanted medical treatment, but added the following caution: "This article is not intended to permit or promote suicide, assisted suicide, or euthanasia." For Judge Calabresi to insist that the New York legislature needs to express its views *once again* on the question of assisted suicide is like asking for one divine revelation too many.

The most jarring feature of all three right-to-die opinions is their unabashed reliance on opinion polls. In a section of his opinion called "Current Societal Attitudes," Judge Reinhardt cites a 1994 Harris Poll indicating that 73 percent of the respondents favored legalizing physician-assisted suicide under certain conditions. "Polls have repeatedly shown that a large majority of Americans—sometimes nearing 90 percent—fully endorse recent legal changes

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granting terminally ill patients, and sometimes their families, the prerogative to accelerate their death by refusing or terminating treatment," Reinhardt enthuses. Judges are usually more subtle in their efforts to follow the election returns; but in any event, "current societal attitudes" are considerably more complicated than the various judges suggest. Three states have held referenda on proposals to allow physician-assisted suicide for the terminally ill. Voters in two states—Washington and California—rejected the proposal by margins of about 54 percent to 46 percent. Oregon voters are the only ones to endorse a decriminalization measure, by a narrow margin of 51 percent to 49 percent. Six state legislatures have recently rejected bills that would permit physician-assisted suicide, and no legislature has passed a decriminalization bill.

This popular ambivalence suggests that the abortion analogy, so heavily relied on by right-do-die advocates, is particularly inappropriate. David Garrow argues that in the abortion battles of the 1960s, professional opinion was substantially ahead of popular opinion: the American Medical Association supported liberalization of abortion laws, for example, while popular support for liberalization lagged behind. By contrast, Garrow notes, in the right-to-die battles today, popular opinion seems to be ahead of professional opinion: the American Medical Association opposes liberalization of assisted suicide laws, while Oregon voters and the Kevorkian jurors seem to support it. Of course, judges have no business reading the polls under any circumstances; but the deep national division on the assisted suicide question should make courts all the more hesitant to jump into the fray.

All this is to say that the assisted suicide question, even more obviously than the abortion question, should be decided by the state legislatures and voters rather than by the courts. If left to their own devices, what are the states likely to decide? The policy question seems much harder than the constitutional question. Clearly, the laws prohibiting assisted suicide are rarely enforced: between 1950 and 1993, only eleven doctors in the United States were prosecuted for killing their terminally ill patients, and none went to prison. As one might expect, the infrequency with which the laws are enforced has dramatically reduced their deterrent effect: one in five doctors, according to a survey by the American Society of Internal Medicine, say they have helped their patients to commit suicide, as have one in five nurses, according to a more recent survey by *The New England Journal of Medicine*. This tacit public policy of refusing to prosecute physician-assisted suicides, except in the most suspicious cases, makes Judge Reinhardt's laments about the "onerous burden" of assisted suicide laws all the more hyperbolic.

In fact, the tension between what the law formally forbids and what society widely tolerates seems to have few social costs: with the exception of showmen like Dr. Kevorkian who openly court prosecution, doctors are relatively free to exercise their professional judgment in close cases. Why is there a burning need to repeal laws prohibiting assisted suicide? In *Aging and Old Age*, Judge Richard Posner argues that "permitting physician-assisted suicide ... [in] cases of physical incapacity might actually reduce the number of suicides and postpone the suicides that occur." If the only choice is between killing themselves now and suffering later, patients who fear they might some day become so incapacitated that they would be unable to commit suicide on their own will kill themselves now. But, Posner argues, if the choice is between suicide now or physician-assisted suicide later, the aging may well choose suicide later, because there is a chance they will be proved to have been mistaken about their future suffering or incapacity.

If Judge Posner's utility curves are correct, legalizing assisted suicide might save a few lives and alleviate some pain. But the difficulty of reaching a consensus about appropriate regulations for physician-assisted suicide, especially given the hysteria of popular elections, suggests that it may be more sensible to leave matters as they are. The circuit courts in California and New York both agreed that the right to physician-assisted suicide can't be exercised without accompanying safeguards; and both circuits, in effect, ordered their state legislatures to adopt procedural regulations to protect against "errors and abuse." (What an odd constitutional right that judges invent, and then command the state legislatures to restrict!) But the gothic complexity of the model regulations cited by the courts should give a pragmatist pause. Judge Reinhardt, for example, commended the following safeguards to the Washington legislature: "witnesses to ensure voluntariness; reasonable, though short, waiting periods to prevent rash decisions; second medical opinions to confirm a patient's terminal status ... psychological examinations to ensure that the patient is not suffering from momentary or treatable depression; reporting procedures that will aid in the avoidance of abuse." These suggestions may or may not be welcomed by the medical community; but surely doctors themselves are better qualified than state legislatures or judges to draft detailed codes of professional regulation.

It's naïve, perhaps, to be surprised at the brazen overconfidence of the New York and California judges, as they substituted their benign moral impulses for the more rigorous judgments of physicians, philosophers and the people's representatives. Maybe, given a chance to play king for a day, most of us would have trouble restraining ourselves, too. But I doubt that advocates of the right to die will thank the judges for this extravagant favor. By rushing to preempt a national debate that has only just begun, and in the most heavy-handed way possible, the California and New York decisions will surely energize the most extreme opponents of assisted suicide and fan the flames of their evangelical crusade. We've been down this road before, of course, but the aftermath of the abortion cases was supposed to have weaned us of the urge to venture down it again. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Gatherings

Bernardo Bertolucci's new film is a record of infatuations. **Stealing Beauty** (Fox Searchlight)—a meaningless title—tells us first of all that the middle-aged Bertolucci is infatuated with Liv Tyler, a young American actress. (I'm speaking only of what's visible on screen.) Such infatuation is hardly new, and sometimes it has produced exceptional work. But sometimes it's embarrassing, as it is here. Tyler has a good face for film, and Bertolucci muses on it at length: the eyes, cheeks and mouth that are fine in themselves and together compose loveliness. Otherwise, Tyler is dull: a droning voice, commonplace talent, no electricity. Yet Bertolucci treats her as if she were, say, a new Audrey Hepburn and thus only makes her slightness slighter and his enslavement more patent.

Another infatuation, more understandable. Bertolucci loves Tuscany, where the film is set. He wants to use it, not only as background but as an aesthetic embrace of his characters. Tuscany *is* paradise, as someone says in the picture, but Bertolucci and his cinematographer, Darius Khondji, are so besotted with it that they have mostly rendered it in heavy postcard colors.

Still another infatuation. Bertolucci, after all these years, is still wonderstruck with decadence. "Decadent! How I love that early Victorian word!" says a character in Shaw's *Fanny's First Play*. Well, Bertolucci is less early Victorian than late neo-realistic, as he reruns the symptoms of rotted European morality that oozed across the screen in the '60s and '70s. When Tyler goes to a large party in a large villa, we expect that, after enough wine and enough pot, we'll see the Ugly Facts about these seemingly beautiful people. And, unfortunately, Bertolucci does not disappoint.

Bertolucci's original story—a generous adjective—was made into a screenplay by the American novelist Susan Minot, who has an unwavering eye for the predictable and an ear for the tired phrase. (One lover to another: "I like it when you're mad.") The basic idea is that Tyler, now 19, has come to a hilltop villa to have her portrait done by an Irish artist who lives there with his wife and a garland of guests. Tyler is also returning to this place because here she had her first kiss (not from the artist) and may now have her first sex. She will also try to discover the lover of her now-deceased mother who might have begotten her at this very villa.

Not unusable themes, but Bertolucci is so avid for "touches" that the story gets smothered with atmospheric baggage. One of the guests (Jeremy Irons) is terminally ill and is near the end; his function, on his way out, is to urge Tyler to live—by which he means to copulate. Also on the premises is a "legendary art dealer" (Jean Marais, Cocteau's erstwhile ideal now in his 80s) intended, I suppose, to give perspective to the century. He is mere ambulatory décor, as is a journalist who writes advice to the lovelorn (Stefania Sandrelli, once one of the stunners in Bertolucci's *The Conformist*). And there's an American lawyer and his English girlfriend, who provide samples of sexual intercourse when the director wants to dab it in. Various high-testosterone English and Italian young men are woven through for differing reasons, and there's an overnight visit by an Italian army lieutenant for no reason whatsoever.

Naturally there are big dinner tables in the kitchen and big luncheon tables under the Tuscan skies, and naturally what looks initially like a group of attractively tinted souls turns out to have different colors. The general atmosphere is supposed to be sexual, through which Tyler is moving toward defloration. Twice she accidentally witnesses couples grappling. Her near-seduction is accompanied by hootchy-kootchy "Oriental" music (and there's no reason to think that Bertolucci was being funny; he has no humor).

But long before the promised end, we sense that, interested though he may have been in Tyler's story, Bertolucci was chiefly concerned to employ his infatuations in what he thought would be a Chekhovian mode. Assemble a group of different people in a country house, each with a strand of history and a purpose, and the result is Chekhov, right? This was the delusion that hobbled the recent Russian film *Burnt by the Sun*, and it does the same to *Stealing Beauty*.

Something else becomes clear about Bertolucci. When a career is so heavily laden with vacuous artiness, so full of inadequately examined choices, so emptily assumptive of superiority, a hard fact looms. Fundamentally, under the chichi, Bertolucci is stupid.

Nicolas Roeg is a minor Bertolucci. The Italian's career is swathed in artiness,

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but it does have some lucid intervals; Roeg's career is more consistently gauzy. His obsession with visuals—a paradox in a visual art—weakens what might possibly have been successfully dramatic in his work.

Roeg's latest, **Two Deaths** (Castle Hill), structurally resembles *Stealing Beauty*. A group of people are brought together and, in the course of the story, are revealed to be otherwise than what they seemed at first. As with Bertolucci, Roeg's implicit model is the theater but at a rather lower level. His story doesn't involve a long stay in the country—only one evening's dinner party. Roeg's model isn't Chekhov, it's J.B. Priestley.

The place is Romania in Ceauşescu's last days, though Allan Scott's screenplay doesn't specify it. I don't know why not; the dictator's portrait is on many walls and Timişoara is mentioned. Presumably this city is Bucharest, with violence exploding in the streets. We are in the home of a very rich doctor who is the dictator's personal physician. His housekeeper, as we learn through numerous flashbacks, is the woman he fell in love with when they were both young. He is still mad about her, but she still loves the man she loved then; and that other man lies hopelessly paralyzed upstairs in the doctor's house. In return for her service to the doctor, which includes the use of her body when and how he wants it, he takes care of the afflicted man upstairs. And who was responsible for the affliction? Try not to guess too soon.

The doctor has invited a dozen or so friends for dinner, but only three can make their way through the fighting in the streets. Apparently he wanted to reveal some of his secrets to them; and of course we learn more about them all while a lavish dinner is served. A former school chum, now a brutal army officer busy in the streets, drops in for a snack. All the stories come to a conclusion arranged by a toweringly banal imagination.

The housekeeper is played by the Brazilian Sonia Braga, who presumably accepts only those roles in which she can strip or be stripped. The doctor is the delightfully skilled English actor Michael Gambon, who endeavors to make his character credible. The directing is as lurid as the script is obtuse. And the editing! Roeg begins the picture with a long sequence in which street battles are intercut with close-ups of a cook gutting fish and chopping meat. Cruel as it would be to wish that the director himself were under the cook's knives, the thought does occur. •

Literature, nationalism, and lousy taste.

The Wacousta Syndrome

By Andy Lamey

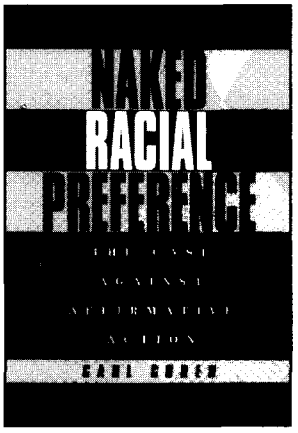
I.

By 1951, Borges had enough. Argentina had given rise to a wave of literary nationalism, and he felt concerned enough to break from his habit of avoiding political comment to deliver a lecture which now survives as "The Argentine Writer and Tradition." In that speech, Borges denounced the strange quarantine that nationalist critics had imposed on native works, their view that Argentine literature was a thing apart, uncontaminated by any influence from Spain or Europe or elsewhere, that it was a wholly indigenous literary "tradition." Borges charged that the nationalists, in their rush to canonize indigenous works, such as those of the gaucho poets, had abandoned any concern for aesthetic quality in favor of a fetishized devotion to "local color." Borges believed, by contrast, in the cosmopolitan nature of literary influence, in its ability to pollinate across national borders and through the ages. And so he called on the Argentine writer to take the whole of the Western tradition as the quarry for his imagination, and never to settle for second best. "If we surrender ourselves to that voluntary dream which is artistic creation, we

Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature
by Margaret Atwood
(Oxford University Press, 126 pp., $19.95)

Andy Lamey, a former TNR reporter-researcher, studies philosophy at the University of Ottawa and is editing a book on Quebec nationalism.

IDEAS & CONSEQUENCES



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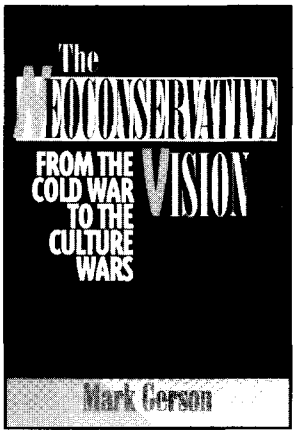

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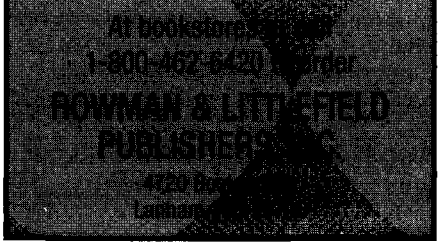

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shall be Argentine and we shall also be good or tolerable writers."

The extent to which Borges's idea resonates today depends in part on where you grew up. Literary nationalism is hardly unique to Argentina. In this century Australia has been the site of a similar debate. And back before the United States was any kind of superpower, Emerson articulated a similar worry when he told his fellow New Englanders that "we have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe. The spirit of the American freeman is already suspected to be timid, imitative, tame." Literary nationalism usually takes root in small, out-of-the-way places that are anxious about the influence of a foreign power. In small doses, it can be part of a nation's developing self-confidence, but usually it is the sort of thing a country grows out of. Critics can go on holding native works to a lower standard only for so long before Borgesian calls to maturity are sounded. When that call does not arrive, or when it is ignored, and literary nationalism is allowed to spread, or even to become the dominant critical school, a country's understanding of its literature—of its identity—may be damaged.

In our day it is the culture of the United States that casts a long and anxiety-producing shadow, and this unprecedented influence has given rise to a correspondingly unprecedented literary nationalism in yet another out-of-the-way place. That place is English-speaking Canada, where Borges's strictures urgently deserve a hearing. In Canada, you are sometimes forced to choose between how you feel about your country and how you feel about good books. The literary criticism of Margaret Atwood has a lot to do with how Canadians came to be faced with this unenviable choice. But this is a story about cultural memory, and so it is important to start at the beginning.

English Canada had its share of problems in the 1960s and the early 1970s, but on the whole things were much sunnier than they were in the United States. Instead of a divisive foreign war, a demoralizing scandal at the highest levels of political office or a spate of crushing assassinations, the country was awash in a celebratory nationalism. It had an economic component, but mostly it was about what its advocates called cultural nationalism, as they urged people to "read Canadian," to "Canadianize" university curricula and faculties, to lobby for state-sponsored arts and culture patronage. This baby-boomer phenomenon was partly a healthy rejection of the belief of the previous generation that nothing of cultural significance could be produced domestically; and, unlike some nationalisms, the majority of these cultural nationalists evinced a genuine respect for pluralism. Less admirable, however, was a self-righteous attitude toward a certain other country. This attitude was common also to previous waves of Canadian national celebration, and it was best expressed by the turn of the century journalist Andrew Macphail, who, looking back on the "Canada First" nationalist movement of the nineteenth century, lamented that "for a generation we have been the thank-Gods of America. We were not like those republicans and sinners ... who lived to the southward, with whom it was dangerous for simple-minded people like ourselves to have any truck or trade."

This traditional suspicion of the United States helps to explain why cultural nationalism in Canada was primarily a left-of-center movement. And the '60s version was unique in the degree to which it saw literature as an accessory to nationhood. Canada would not be a real country, it was argued, unless English Canada could be shown to have a unique cultural identity. Canadian books had to be read through the prism of this quest for a national character. At the center of this movement was a group of writers in Toronto, and at the center of the group was Margaret Atwood.

MARGARET ATWOOD BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

She was already a prominent poet and novelist. *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, her first book of literary criticism, which appeared in 1972, is the founding text of this school. Unlike, say, Lionel Trilling's engagement with literature as "the human activity that takes the fullest and most precise account of variousness, possibility, complexity and difficulty," Atwood read with a simpler concern in mind. It was: victimhood. Explicitly eschewing any evaluation of "'good writing' or 'good style' or 'literary excellence'," she began with the consideration that "Canada is a collective victim," and came up with a four-part taxonomy of "victim positions" ("Position one: To deny the fact that you are a victim.... Position four: To be a Creative nonvictim.")

Atwood proceeded to impose this dreary template on Canadian books. *Survival* is composed of unpersuasive chapters about victimized immigrants, victimized families, even "animal victims." At the end, Atwood included a list of "starting points for those who would like to know more about their own culture." In something of a first for a work of literary criticism, the premier text recommended here is the Yellow Pages. "If these are carefully studied," Atwood instructed, "they will often tell

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you about things available in the community which you never suspected." To this day, the average English Canadian literary work can expect to sell approximately 700 copies. *Survival* would eventually sell over 80,000 copies. It would be difficult to overestimate its influence.

The nature of that influence can be illustrated by examining Atwood's discussion of a long-forgotten Canadian poem of 1856, called "The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay," by Charles Sangster.

> Here Nature holds her Carnival of Isles.
> Steeped in warm sunlight all the merry day,
> Each nodding tree and floating greenwood smiles,
> And moss-crowned monsters move in grim array.
> All night the Fisher spears his finny prey;
> The piney flambeaux reddening the deep,
> Past the dim shores, or up some mimic bay:
> Like grotesque banditti they boldly sweep
> Upon the startled prey, and stab them while they sleep.

Piney flambeaux? Grotesque banditti? It is hard not to concur with the prenationalist critic who called this effort of this third-rate Spenser "diffuse, vague, and ridiculously inflated in diction." Even Atwood notes an inconsistency between the poem's picture of nature as a carnival and its picture of nature as a monster's lair. Revealingly, however, she goes on to remark that "in any other country this kind of unexplained inconsistency of image might be just bad poetry; here it's bad poetry *plus*, and the plus is the doubtless unintended revelation of a split attitude [toward nature]." The poem is not being read, in other words, from the standpoint of its success as a poem. Atwood is writing apologetically, from the standpoint of local color and national need. This political and cultural extenuation is applied exclusively to native works. If the poem were not Canadian, the Canadian reader would be free to judge it as art, uncomplicated by an appeal to her patriotism.

This type of reading was for many years popular among English Canadian critics. Throughout the '70s and '80s one finds nationalists declaring that "I repeat once again that the mainstream of Canadian literature has nothing to do with literary merit; it is a matter of sphere of consciousness," or that "only a consciously nationalist criticism will provide a convincing rationale for making Canadian literature a separate field of academic inquiry." A grown man has seriously proposed that Canadian short-story writing is "the development of the Letter to the Editor as a specialized literary form."

The cause of this lack of faith in the ability of Canadian writers to work in purely literary terms is complicated, but it is bound up with a prodigious anxiety about the United States. Canadian books in English must set English Canada apart, and if that involves celebrating "bad poetry," well, that is a price to be paid in service to the nation. It was in this context that a work of criticism such as *Canadian Literature: Surrender or Revolution* could demonize artistic development. In discussing Canadian poets who admitted to an American influence, Robin Mathews, the author of that drearily titled work, made clear the consequences of this "rejection of the Canadian tradition": "At one level they have found in U.S. poetry the liberation and the new directions—on a purely technical level—that they have sought. On another level they have been absorbed by the powerful rhetoric the U.S. has broadcast about itself. That rhetoric invites an annexationist response in Canadians."

This link between stylistic innovation and treason has its roots in the perennial nationalist dream of an organic literature, wholly indigenous, uncontaminated by the alien. That such a literary development is neither realistic or desirable should be obvious to anyone who

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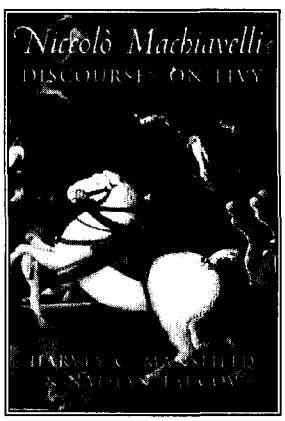

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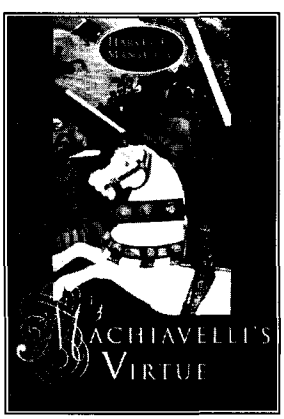

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has had their imagination captured by a foreign work. And it is not even a particularly patriotic dream, as John Metcalf has admirably observed. He writes movingly of reading as a "private and wayward pleasure," free of anxiety about national identity; and in his important book *What is a Canadian Literature?*, which appeared in 1988, he challenges a critic who called, rather eerily, for fiction "rooted in local soil." "The division he is trying to create between 'international modernism' and fiction 'rooted in local soil' is an entirely false division," Metcalf wrote. "It would be difficult to imagine a book more rooted in local soil than Joyce's *Ulysses*. Did Alice Munro's use of the tools of 'international modernism' somehow weaken the rootedness of her vision of Jubilee [a fictional setting in Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women*]?" But this is the voice of a dissenter.

Atwood is not responsible for every nationalist excess, but she has made her own contribution. In 1973, in an article defending *Survival*—it had been charged with not being nationalistic *enough*—Atwood made a strange and unforgettable remark:

> Other literatures *do* have "victims;" but we have to consider the relationship between victim and society. For instance, in *Hard Times*, the working class is a victim within an otherwise non-victim society; in American literature, those who fail do so by dropping out of a society where success is the norm. The thing about Canadian victims is that they tend to be representative of the society. In *As for Me and My House* [a middleweight prairie novel by Sinclair Ross that appeared in 1941], everyone else in the book is failing too. Victims the most like Canadians are to be found in the literature of other "emerging nations" or former and present colonies (or, as someone suggested, the literature of the Holocaust) and I think it would be useful to do a study on this.

Canadian victims and Holocaust victims! This appropriation of the literature of the Holocaust as an aid to understanding Canadian group-identity is not entirely offhand. In *Survival*, Atwood had said, about the patterns of victimization that she discussed, that "these key patterns, taken together, constitute the shape of Canadian literature insofar as it is a *Canadian* literature, and that shape is the reflection of a national habit of mind." The literature of the Holocaust presumably resembles the literature of Canada, then, because of a similar "habit of mind."

The poverty of this analysis is plain. Still, it is necessary to understand how it is that Atwood and the nationalists let their identity-anxiety push them to such lengths, and in this connection mention needs to be made of Northrop Frye. Atwood studied with Frye, and her critical method of looking for "patterns" owes a great deal to his taxonomy of literary myths and structures. To be sure, Frye's writing about Canadian literature includes repeated, honorable calls to accept "international" standards, and he made one such call at the height of the nationalist fervor, when the country needed to hear it most. Still, as Edmund Wilson pointed out in *O Canada* (an otherwise hysterically pro-Canadian book), critics of the 1950s were "uncertain of themselves. They are inclined either to overpraise Canadian books or to be afraid to praise them," and he singled out Frye as guilty of the former, due to his decade-long policy of reviewing domestic poetry "in Canadian proportions [not] in world proportions.... I have for the most part discussed Canadian poets as though no other contemporary poetry were available for Canadian readers."

Frye was certainly the greatest critic that Canada has produced. (*Anatomy of Criticism* was, by 1983, the third most-cited book of this century.) To read of him nearly breaking down in tears while teaching Milton is to know that he was, before anything else, a friend of literature. But on this question the giant stumbled. He is a multitude, he contradicts himself. And that someone of his stature would read Canadian writing through a nationalist filter surely provided Atwood's generation with an unfortunate precedent.

But Frye came before, and what comes after is also important. *Survival* met with a lot of severe criticism, and it no longer has the status it once did. But the damage was done. The important thing now is to understand what it can be like to grow up in the wake of a nationalist literary generation. The influence of the cultural nationalists in English Canada is spread largely through the schools and the universities. To be instructed that one's identity is that of a victim, to be tested on it in class, to be taught to read the literature of one's country in anti-literary terms: this is an alienating, demoralizing experience. You walk away from it with an unnatural aversion to books written by the people with whom you share a home. This can take a long time to overcome.

II.

Strange Things is made up of four lectures on Canadian literature that Atwood delivered at Oxford in 1991, published now for the first time. Overseas interest in Canadian writing as a literature is uncommon, and so the critical responsibility for such lectures is considerable. *Strange Things* is something of an event. It provides an ideal opportunity to reflect on, and gain distance from, the excesses of the past. Atwood does this, in one way. She once defended her exclusion of immigrant writers from *Survival* by stating that "it seems to me dangerous to talk about 'Canadian' patterns of sensibility in the work of people who entered and/or entered and left the country at a developmentally late stage of their lives." Now, in her new book, she is willing to discuss some immigrant female writers, even though "none of these women grew up in Canada; but then, neither did a lot of people who have written about the country." This inclusion is to be welcomed. The tone is calmer than in her previous criticism, and she is loose enough to joke that "surely the search for the Canadian identity is like a dog chasing its own tail." The lectures themselves are quite funny.

But these winning qualities are in the service of an empty, dishonest project. "These lectures depart from the position," Atwood writes early on,

> that, although in every culture many stories are told, only some are told and retold, and that these recurring stories bear examining. If such stories were parts of a symphony you'd call them leitmotifs, if they were personality traits you'd call them obsessions, and if it were your parents telling them at the dinner-table during your adolescence you'd call them boring. But, in literature, they hold a curious fascination both for those who tell them and for those who hear them; they are handed down and reworked ...

Sounds pretty anodyne. Atwood is arguing for the existence of a certain Canadian literary tradition, and implying that the works in that tradition are canonical, and have an audience in Canada, if not quite a massive one. This is an interesting, uplifting argument. The problems begin when you take a closer look at the works that Atwood is positing and praising.

Thus, in her first lecture, about the folkloric and literary representations of the Franklin expedition, a doomed nineteenth-century effort to find the Northwest Passage, she discusses an out-of-print novel called *Perpetual Motion*, which appeared in 1982. It appears again in her third lecture, which treats the literary representations of the Wendigo, a cannibalistic monster from aboriginal legend. That the author of that novel is the male half of her familial partnership may or may not have influ-

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enced Atwood's decision to discuss it repeatedly, but she does not disclose this relationship to her foreign audience. More importantly, her focus on this novel is wholly idiosyncratic, when considered from the standpoint of literary reality in Canada. Indeed, of the twenty novels that Atwood mentions, a full quarter are obscure and out-of-print. As is the only play she quotes from. Likewise the only book of literary sketches that she discusses. I don't mean to suggest that artistic achievement is synonymous with popularity. Critics must sometimes make the case for a neglected work. But quietly assimilating minor and obscure works into the canon of a nation's literature is something else. Such sleight of hand deserves to be challenged on several grounds.

The first concerns the portrait of Canadian writing with which Atwood leaves her audience. Consider her lecture on the Wendigo, where she cobbles together a lackluster mix of fiction, poetry and non-fiction, leaning heavily on aggressively unrewarding works such as William Henry Drummond's deservedly unread 1901 poem "The Windigo." Atwood patiently quotes Drummond demonstrating his flair for a French Canadian accent, in a passage describing a cruel logging-gang foreman:

> Beeg feller, always watchin' on hees leetle weasel eye,
> De gang dey can't do not'ing but he see dem purty quick,
> Wit' hees 'Hi dere, w'at you doin?' ev'ry tam he's passin' by
> An' de bad word he was usin', wall! It often mak' me sick.
>
> An' he carry silver w'issle wit' de chain aroun' hees neck
> For fear he mebbe los'it, and ev'rybody say
> He mus' buy it from de devil w'en he's passin' on Kebeck
> But if it's true dat story, I dunno how moche he pay.

Risible stuff such as this is typical of Canadian literature in Atwood's mind alone. But it will not reward genuine criticism, so she must content herself with interpretations on the order of "the bad thing that happens to [the foreman] ... is a direct result of the bad thing he himself has been doing to someone else." Were Atwood presenting the material in this lecture as nothing more than the subject of her own eccentric enthusiasm (which is what it is), it might have a certain charm. But she holds it up as something more, as when she hyperbolically declares that "one of the first laws of late twentieth-century Canadian literature being that he who scorns Native beliefs will come to a sticky end." One of the first laws about contemporary Canadian writing, in fact, is that the overwhelming majority of it is not about aboriginal people or their beliefs.

Atwood's resort to misleading claims such as this is in part a consequence of her decision to expound, on local color—sorry, "the malevolent North"—and to put sociological concerns before literary ones (as evinced in her decision to exclude completely "the literature of urban life"). And even so, she cannot make her theme into a coherent whole, and must instead spend most of her energies on plot summaries, with a few platitudes thrown in for good measure. ("For Ethel Wilson, as for Gwen MacEwen, the mind of the observing individual helps to determine what is observed.") The result is an unilluminating, distorted presentation of the purported subject of the lectures, which is Canadian "literature."

There is also the more serious matter of her standards of selection. What criteria must a work meet before Atwood will promote it into an object of Canadian fascination? Consider one of the books to which she kindles. John Richardson's *Wacousta; or, The Prophecy: A Tale of the Canadas*, a melodramatic romance novel, was first published in London in 1832. It was popular in England, and in

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the following year a publisher in Philadelphia brought out an American edition. There were no international copyright laws for books at the time, and the pirating of foreign work was common. This happened to *Wacousta.* The American title was changed to make it not a tale of the Canadas, but of "Detroit and Michillimackinac." It was reissued again in 1833 in two volumes, not the original three. This second pirated edition, according to one nationalist biographer, was "abridged by some 15,000 words, changing plot, character, style, philosophy, setting—almost every aspect of the novel."

It is an open question to what degree this edition, heavily edited for an American audience, can still be considered Canadian literature. In the United States it was highly popular, reprinted, and even made into a play (not by Richardson). But it never had the same response in Canada. Richardson bitterly lamented his Canadian failure in his memoirs, noting that "not more than one twentieth of the Canadian people were aware of the existence of the book, and of the twentieth not one third cared a straw whether the author was a Canadian or a Turk." On the differences between his popularity in Canada and in the United States, Richardson would go so far as to refer to "the vast difference of the reception I had invariably met with by the *reading* Americans, and the *non-reading* Canadians."

Richardson's efforts to find a Canadian publisher for *Wacousta* were futile. In 1868, sixteen years after his death and coinciding with the introduction of Canadian copyright law, the abridged, pirated edition was finally published in Montreal. The spelling was changed and the end of the title was now simply "An Indian Tale." There is no evidence that it was particularly popular, and by the turn of the century, a Canadian newspaper would report that *Wacousta* "is now out of print, and copies of it are now practically unobtainable." *Wacousta* was reprinted in Canada a few times after that, but not until fifty years after Richardson's death, which made the book public domain.

The nationalists of the 1920s dubbed *Wacousta* one of the "master works of Canadian literature," but the masterwork could not find an audience, and by the 1930s it was again out of print. After that, what little attention Richardson received was unambiguous. "Wrote abominably," was how one critic put it in 1954. As late as 1961 it is possible to find a critic, speaking of Canadian writing as a whole, declare that "the worst (which we therefore here ignore) was in the popular historical romance of Richardson, Kirby, and Sir Gilbert Parker and the sentimental novel of local colour." These judgments echo nineteenth-century critical estimates of Richardson's work. In 1881, the historian J.C. Dent flatly asserted that "it is difficult to understand how any writer possessed of true critical sagacity could have found anything in them to admire." The *Cyclopedia of American Biography* struck a similar note. "His novels are deficient in interest and his histories are inaccurate." By the 1960s, *Wacousta,* like almost everything Richardson wrote, had disappeared from view.

Then something happened. In 1967, under the editorship of the exquisitely named Carl F. Klinck, a nationalist press brought out a new edition of *Wacousta.* The nationalists could now grant the book and its author a ferocious welcome. "An internationally famous romance, whose appeal has lasted down to the present day." "Seminal." "Fresh and exciting." Richardson provided "the foundation stone of Canadian literature to which Canadian writers may look back for guidance." *Wacousta* was "at the centre of the Canadian imagination." And an appropriate quantity of critical apparatus was conferred upon the sudden "father of Canadian literature." There was a biography of Richardson called *The Canadian Don Quixote: The Life and Works of Major John Richardson, Canada's First Novelist.* A book of criticism, *The Wacousta Syndrome,* would allege, inevitably, that his work sheds light on "Canadian identity." Someone who is allowed to teach the young at Royal Military College has gone so far as to write a book that "explores Richardson's influence on James Reaney, Alice Munro, Robertson Davies" and other writers. Leaving aside the profound differences between Munro and Davies, it is almost certainly false that Richardson had any "influence" on them, as everything he wrote would have been almost impossible to find until they were well into their careers.

John Metcalf has properly described this type of nationalistic tampering with the literary past as the manufacture of "the new ancestors." Of course, no corresponding interest in Richardson exists in England or the United States, where he had his original audiences. That is because the only claim that can be made on behalf of *Wacousta* is that it was "the first major novel written by a writer born in this country," and that is a nationalist claim, not a literary claim.

This spinning of the literary past is not unique to *Wacousta,* but this case is special in one way. In an act that nicely illustrates the nationalist concern with "teachability," the Klinck reprint of the edited American version was still further abridged, in 1967, by another 26,000 words. This left not only a terrible book, but an incoherent terrible book. Even a nationalist critic has admitted that "now, with over 40,000 words cut, it is no longer possible to even follow the plot of Richardson's novel."

It is this broken, sorry thing that finds its way into Atwood's bibliography. She cannot bring herself to quote from it, but I cannot restrain myself. The following two sentences describe life in the garrison of Detroit in 1763:

> The officers never ventured out unless escorted by a portion of their men, who although appearing to be dispersed among the warriors, still kept sufficiently together to be enabled, in a moment of energy, to afford succor, not only to each other, but to their superiors. On these occasions, as a further security against surprise, the troops left within were instructed to be in readiness, at a moment's warning, to render assistance, if necessary, to their companions, who seldom on any occasion ventured out of reach of the cannon of the fort, the gate of which was hermetically closed, while supernumerary sentinels were posted along the ramparts, with a view to give the alarm if anything extraordinary was observed to occur without.

Counterpoise

for Tin

No notes to this—I can't explain anything.

I have shattered side windows, crossed avenues
to meet your muse on a torn down block where
she passes me excuses and refuses my advances.

But I know her history and can use it
against her; I hold her up in your name.
For myself, I travel half-lame, horseless

and dizzy with endurance. Plazas open out
before me and contract when I arrive.
I hear windows banging shut. You know this:

I am always waiting for space, I pander to air.
I rob towards a higher place. Imagine,
a symbiotic heaven in which nothing must be equal.

MELANIE REHAK

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This exquisite passage is typical. *Wacousta* is full of wordy, poorly structured, dead passages. In larger doses it is simply unpleasant to read. And any discussion of *Wacousta* that does not begin (and end) with the matter of its artistic failure—which is whole, unrepentant, a thing of wonder—is an exercise in critical irresponsibility. For her part, in trying to make a point about whites "going Indian," that is, rejecting their own society and trying to pass as aboriginal (which is one of the many, many things that happens in *Wacousta*), Atwood treats the book as a serious literary document, and says of it and another book that "two essentially nineteenth century writers illustrate the enormous popular appeal of this idea." She asserts about the novel that "it was phenomenally popular, both in Canada and the United States, until at least the mid-1930s." Here, and elsewhere, Atwood is reading Canada's literary past through a supremely unliterary prism. And nowhere in her book does she acknowledge that even after all of such nationalist efforts to rehabilitate the book, few Canadians have even heard of *Wacousta*, let alone read it.

Instead Atwood goes on to tell us that "*Wacousta* was recently given a resurrection, in the form of a play called *Wacousta!*" By mentioning this awful and obscure work, Atwood can give *Wacousta* and her reading of Canadian literary history the appearance of normalcy: it looks like she is merely checking off items in an unremarkable, orthodox tradition. This is emphatically not the case. The author of *Wacousta!*, James Reaney, has characterized his engagement with the original work in this way: "Although I had the rare privilege of reading *Wacousta* in its three volume original English edition, I was unmoved and unexcited.... I couldn't seem to read this Gothic epic romance. There is a certain amount of skill needed to read it beside the normal suspension of disbelief." This is not artistic inspiration in the normal sense. This is a patriot admitting that he has given lingering attention to a book which he finds unreadable. Perhaps this extra-artistic motivation is why Reaney's version was itself clumsily written. Patricia Ludwick, who was in the play, observed about *Wacousta!* that, unless performed in "rural areas" or before children, "it is simply laughable."

There are also other areas, notably in her lecture on Canadian women writers, in which Atwood lets her nationalism color her account of the past. She divides women writers into two "waves." The first wave was made up of nineteenth-century pioneers, "and the 'second wave', women of the twentieth century who followed these first women and either built upon, wrote about or contrasted their own lives with those of their predecessors." Atwood has herself written poetry about a nineteenth-century female settler, but she is again inventing a tradition when she generalizes in this way.

Atwood claims that the women writers of the nineteenth century inaugurate "three patterns: the tourist, the coper, and something we might call 'dismayed,' " each reacting to her surroundings according to her model. Consider her evidence for the "pattern" of the coper. This is the only one of her patterns that she stoops to substantiate. Her evidence consists entirely of detecting it in two twentieth-century works. Of the first, she simply asserts "it's the Catherine Parr Traill model—the practical coper—that Joyce Marshall uses for the female protagonist of her story 'The Old Woman' "; but she offers no proof that Marshall had Traill in mind as a model or that Traill provided any meaningful influence. Atwood's second reference is to Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* (1974), in which she, Atwood, quotes a passage in which a fictional character muses about how much she is unlike Traill!

In the end, Atwood never establishes that Traill served as anyone's "literary

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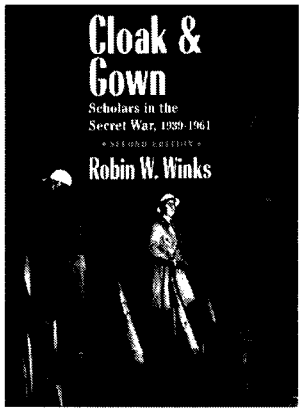

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ancestress." This is unsurprising, perhaps, when you turn to the work by Traill that Atwood has in mind. "Traill's book, *The Canadian Settler's Guide*, is a practical how-to book for prospective immigrants. She concentrates on coping—recipes, furnishings, and making the best of it." In Argentina, at least, they only wanted to canonize bad poetry. It is a little difficult to argue with someone who is willing to lecture on the literary influence of a work that is, in large measure, a cookbook. (Although, in fairness, the sections on tasty jams are quite good.)

There are ten pages in *Strange Things* that should be taken seriously. They occur at the end of Atwood's discussion of the Franklin expedition, where she finally makes a case for the attraction that genuine artists have felt toward the quest for the Northwest Passage. Atwood is good when she gets to the poets Gwendolyn MacEwen and Al Purdy, the novelist Mordecai Richler, and the singer-songwriter Stan Rogers. And yet it is important to remember that most of their work was done after 1960. It is only from that point on that we can safely talk about the beginning of a Canadian literature or literary tradition. The sad (and the liberating) truth is that, with few exceptions, most earlier Canadian writing, especially pre-World War II efforts, does not bear examination in literary terms. It is—to put it generously—of merely historical interest.

After 1960, however, things change. After 1960, the books teem with immigrants, streetcars and restaurants at closing time: this does not make them un-Canadian, it makes them true to how we live. After 1960, there appear many fine writers, Alice Munro chief among them, with large, well-deserved reputations inside and outside Canada. Serious examinations of Canadian literature must repair to this era, to our own time, within which Atwood's better work, such as *The Handmaid's Tale*, is appropriately included. Which is why, in attempting to pass off a literary tradition of which few Canadian readers or writers have heard, Atwood is reduced to citing *The Book of Woodcraft*, and to giving John Richardson more space than Alice Munro. Perhaps it is because so many of the nationalists grew up in the 1950s, before English Canada had a real literature, that they can permit themselves to hold Canadian work to a lower aesthetic standard, or to no aesthetic standard at all.

"The famous Canadian problem of identity may seem a rationalized, self-pitying or made up problem to those who have never had to meet it, or never understood that it was there to be met," wrote Northrop Frye. "But it is with human beings as with birds: the creative instinct has a great deal to do with the assertion of territorial rights." This, too, resonates. And it helps explain why Canadian literary criticism was for so long a receptacle of political anxiety, why a false, anachronistic book such as Atwood's *Strange Things* can still be written. Culturally speaking, there is a danger in living next to, and sharing a language with, a country as forceful and omnipresent and seductive as the United States; but this is not a danger that makes us victims. We must own up, instead, to the fact that people in an out-of-the-way place, like people in every place, have to read and think and write as best they can. Neither power nor powerlessness exempts us from the duty to be honest with ourselves. In voluntary dreams begin responsibilities. •

The Fact-checker

BY JAMES WOOD

Cross Channel by Julian Barnes

(Knopf, 211 pp., $21)

Two landscapes, one American and one English, from roughly the same period. The American landscape is seen by Willa Cather in *My Antonia* (1918), and the English landscape is seen by E. M. Forster in *The Longest Journey* (1907).

Cather's narrator sits by a window in Lincoln, Nebraska. "My window was open, and the earthy wind blowing through made me indolent. On the edge of the prairie, where the sun had gone down, the sky was turquoise blue, like a lake, with gold light throbbing in it." The man is reading Virgil's *Georgics*. He is bluntly halted by a line of the poetry: "for I shall be the first, if I live, to bring the Muse into my country." This is a moment of soft revelation for the narrator. It is also the means by which Cather establishes her own originality, the obligation she might feel, as a novelist of the West, to bring the Muse into her country; but at no point does Cather say this, or even play with direct statement. Instead she rustles with suggestion, letting us know, as if this moment were like the prairie itself, that we are on the verge of a discovery that can hardly be voiced. "We left the classroom quietly, conscious that we had been brushed by the wing of a great feeling. . . ."

Forster's hero, Rickie, sits on a hill in Wiltshire. Forster comments: "Here is the heart of our island: the Chilterns, the North Downs, the South Downs radiate hence. The fibres of England unite in Wiltshire, and did we condescend to worship her, here we should erect our national shrine." Rickie reflects on how much he loves "these unostentatious fields." Then he pulls out a volume of Shelley and recites a poem. The poem annoys him, but it is clear that in some way Shelley consecrates this moment and this piece of land.

Both passages are characteristic of their authors, and of the literary traditions that produced them. Cather's land is ancient—as ancient as Virgil's soil—but anciently unknown. It is unliterary. If literature is brought to plow it, then this imposition will be a strenuous and artisanal task, with "an earthy wind blowing through." Just as Cather's narrator leaves the classroom quietly, so does her writing. It swerves away from the academic, away from knowledge, away from cleverness, away from the merely known. Its window is open. Yet the writing trembles hugely, with an earnestness toward truth, and an aroused plainness.

Forster's English landscape is not unknown, it is already sacred. Forster can condescend to the idea of erecting a national shrine precisely because the land is already its own shrine, hallowed and binding. England is known, named, literary. Forster's writing is cozy, prissy-clever. It has a contract with the reader, to whom Forster makes direct address ("our island"). It is slackly written: the word "fibres" is at once lame, in a literary sense, and awkwardly hints at moral fiber or backbone. Cather is suggestive, stroking the not-said; Forster is explicit, and eager to clear things up. Where Cather respects a mystery, Forster engulfs one.

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Despite his reputation as "a novelist of ideas," his interest in France and his Anglo-American suavity, Julian Barnes is a very English writer who is squarely in Forster's descent. Like Forster, he is brisk with mystery, a little fussy, undeniably clever and certainly cozy. He is Forster without the grand liberalism, and without the triumphant uncertainties of *A Passage To India*. He has adapted Forster's penchant for interrupting his texts (Virginia Woolf complained that Forster was like a light sleeper who was always getting up to come into the next room) into a mode of direct address with his readers. He is thoroughly literary, and fond of literary sports. Like Forster, he has an essentially neat mind. He clears up his intellectual mess as he goes along.

Life, in Barnes's books, is a picnic of the mind. Barnes spreads a cloth and presents riddles and games for our ingestion. Actually, under skeptical investigation, these riddles and games begin to look like simplicities that are merely camouflaged as fiendish complexities. His fiction is beguiling because it is confident about the known and jauntily undaunted by the unknown.

Barnes is famous for the bright and waxy health of his "ideas." But his fiction is addicted to fact, to the tidiness and undistress of the known. His novels and stories propose mysteries which then, in a quiet spirit of self-congratulation, they solve. Of course, the solutions are not announced as such. Often they are announced as further complications. But, in Barnes's world, mysteries are clearer for their enunciation as such. Perplexity need never cause real pain. Talk clears the air, and is preferred to silence. And so, when Barnes tells us that something is complicated, or paradoxical, it does not sound complicated or paradoxical any longer. "But then the quotidian is often preposterous, and so the preposterous may in return be plausible," as the narrator of one of the stories in *Cross Channel* helpfully offers. Barnes smooths his world into summation. Nothing in this world escapes summation, not least those moments which, he tells us, are escaping summation.

Is this the gift of hard simplicity? Or is it not the trick of easy difficulty? Barnes is a master of the first half of the escape artist's act, when he elaborately imprisons himself. Certainly, Barnes likes to entangle himself. His usual method is to select a simplicity and to turn it into a riddle. What he seems to do, in such a circumstance, is to complicate something. But his complications do not cross his simplicities at any moment; they run parallel to them. His novel *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* is a concertina of riddles, but it is dedicated, in all its smart expansions and contractions, to the production of a facile and solving music.

One of its contractions—its half-chapter—is called "Parenthesis," and it has become celebrated as a full-throated contemporary song of love, when such proclamations are rare. In "Parenthesis," the novel's narrator, speaking with the authority and the range of the real Julian Barnes, attempts to probe the mystery of love. The probing is entirely typical of Barnes's procedures. First, we must overpower something that we take for granted, and make it seem more difficult to itself. "Let's start at the beginning. Love makes you happy? No. Love makes the person you love happy? No. Love makes everything all right? Indeed no." So love is not the simplicity we thought it was, says Barnes. (Of course, this simplicity is his making, not ours. His repeated "No's" are stern corrections to unasked questions. How many of Barnes's readers think that "love makes everything all right"?)

Next Barnes fakes—the word is not too strong—the motions of argument. Having established his mystery, Barnes offers deeper mysteries. But the mysteries that he offers are as simple as the

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simple misapprehensions that he thinks he is defeating. We think that the heart is a simple organ, Barnes asserts. (Do we?) But "the heart isn't heart-shaped." Barnes provides some stubborn facts about the heart, such as that in a child, "the heart is proportionately much larger than in an adult," and that "after death the heart assumes the shape of a pyramid." Barnes's narrator visits the butcher and buys an ox's heart. He dissects it "with a radiologist friend." The result of these labors? The heart is not a simple organ. Internally, it is complex and bloody and messy.

One should note the motion here: we are being warned against simplicity in a manner that is itself simplifying. That the final message about love is, at the end of these mental labors, childishly solving, and cozily fenced, is not a surprise: "Love won't change the history of the world ... but it will do something much more important: teach us to stand up to history, to ignore its chin-out strut.... How you cuddle in the dark governs how you see the history of the world." "How you cuddle"! But that is precisely what Barnes offers his readers: a kind of intellectual cuddle, not in the dark, but in good, cleansing daylight.

This is not a prose of discovery, but a prose of the idea of discovery. That is why, although he loves metaphor, and uses it abundantly, his metaphors do not deepen or complicate his world. Comparing his wife's easy sleep with his own restlessness, the narrator in "Parenthesis" confesses: "I admire her because she's got this job of sleeping that we all have to do, every night, ceaselessly, better worked out than I have. She handles it like a sophisticated traveller unthreatened by a new airport. Whereas I lie there in the night with an expired passport, pushing a baggage trolley with a squeaking wheel across to the wrong carousel." But curiously, although Barnes wants us to compare the order of one approach to sleep with the disorder of the other, both are subsumed within the simplifying order of his metaphor. The wife's serenity sounds as easy as the husband's anarchy, because both have been trivialized.

This is one of Barnes's intellectual habits, and it is in evidence in his new book of stories. Two opposing ideas are selected; but as they collide, they each expose the absurdity and the vulnerability of their opposing extremity. This is neat enough to watch, but it seems easy, for what is really difficult is not the vulnerability of extremity, but the troublesome solidity of what is in the middle, of what is not extreme. As the Fool warns Lear, "Thou hast pared thy wit on both sides and left nothing i'th' middle." So has Barnes.

One of the new stories, "Junction," is about the building of the Rouen-Paris-Le Havre railway line in the 1840s. Like most of the stories in this book, it tidily deploys and tidily solves, while pretending not to. The rail-building interests Barnes because the line was largely built by English navvies, and is thus one of the "Cross Channel" entanglements of the French and the British that provides this volume with its title-theme. The story generates a collision between the opposition of scientific triumphalism (the railway) and religious obscurantism (a local *curé*'s belief that the line is preparing not the path of French travelers, but the way of the Lord). Barnes nicely exposes the weakness and the comedy of both extremities. The story is charming, and zany with fact.

Cross Channel ends with a story called "Tunnel," which is about an "elderly English gentleman" who takes the Chunnel train from London to Paris, in the year 2015. He reflects on many of the themes and some of the situations in the book's preceding stories. We suspect that this reflective gentleman may well be Barnes himself. As indeed he is. The story ends: "And the elderly English gentleman, when he returned home, began to write the stories you have just read."

Earlier in the story, Barnes meditates on something that one of his narrators has already announced: the preposterousness of ordinary reality, and hence the ordinariness of the preposterous. The elderly author, thinking about the trick that reality plays on the creative imagination, remembers a woman seen frantically searching her handbag at an airport. What had she lost? Surely, the writer thinks, it could not be something humdrum, like lipstick or film. Perhaps it is a "contraceptive item whose absence would imperil the holiday"? The woman is in his party, and days later, after obsessing about it, he asks her what she had lost at the airport. Her boarding card, she replies.

The author is deliriously happy at the foolishness of the quotidian. He is uncertain which delights him more, "the excess of his misprisions or the primness of the truth." This is nicely phrased. But note that both positions, his misprisions and the truth, are excessive. The imagination, which invented all kinds of disasters for the frantic lady, is excessive; and the truth, which bested imagination, is excessive. Both are a bit ridiculous, and somewhat trivialized. Both have been caricatured, and what is being enjoyed here is not the comic surprise of ordinariness, but the pantomime of banality.

Barnes's fiction caricatures truth while playing games with it. Many of these games have to do with fact. Barnes is in love with facts: true facts, false facts, funny facts, ironic facts. *Flaubert's Parrot*, Barnes's first great success, is an attractive meditation on fact. Barnes takes the details of Flaubert's life and stretches them until they no longer have the dependable silence of facts, but the smart reply of riddle or paradox. He likes to enslave facts with a sense of their own constructedness. It is well-known, for example, that when Flaubert and his friend Du Camp climbed the largest pyramid in Giza to watch the dawn, Flaubert found, attached to the top of the pyramid, a calling card that said *Humbert, Frotteur* and an address in Rouen, Flaubert's own town. Barnes notes that this seems to us one of the great modern ironies. But Flaubert's friend Du Camp had planted the card there the night before; and Flaubert had himself brought the card from Rouen to Egypt. Was Flaubert planning his own traveler's ironies? Barnes, it seems, makes the familiar less stable than we had imagined it to be.

But despite Barnes's postmodern compound eye—the writer, locust-like, seeing around and behind all truths—he is old-fashionedly in love with the surety of fact. In this, he displays his Englishness. He is not a European Pyrrhonist, he is an English empiricist—more precisely, a rogue empiricist, for whom facts, real ones and faked ones, are all pieces of information. *Le Figaro* (of course) has praised Barnes for "the abundance of original thought, the wealth of information" in his work. (Who reads fiction for a "wealth of information"? Original thought puts "information" on a diet, rations it.) For many of Barnes's readers, however, it is hard to tell if he is feeding true or false information. And that is the point. Some of Barnes's somewhat preening details seem benignly verifiable, such as the information that Flaubert likened himself to a camel, and that "*chameau*, camel, was slang for an old courtesan. I do not think this association would have put Flaubert off." And noting that Flaubert also likened himself to a bear, Barnes's narrator gushes forth bear-information: "William Scoresby, the Arctic explorer, noted that the liver of the bear is poisonous—the only part of any quadruped known to be so. Among zookeepers there is no known test for pregnancy in the polar bear. Strange facts that Flaubert might not have found strange."

But some of Barnes's facts are more

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obscure. The elderly English gentleman in "Tunnel" remarks, as the train passes through Lille, that he could get off and visit "the last surviving French slag-heap." But the story is set in 2015. Is this Barnes's prediction of where France's last slag-heap will be situated? Much of the rest of this new book deals in historical information—about Victorian railways, or an English cricket team that was preparing to travel to France in 1789, while revolution was breaking. Most readers will be sure about the Rouen-Paris railway, but unsure about the eighteenth-century cricket team. In Barnes's style of narrative, however, there is no such thing as ruined facts, for all that he goes around happily destroying them. For the facts that Barnes explodes or complicates have the same status as the true facts (like the building of the French railways) that he leaves alone. All his facts startle so as to soothe.

How? First, they offer the riddle of their strangeness—cricket was last played at the Olympics, in 1900, in Los Angeles, according to one of the stories here—and then the impregnability of their existence, which is itself a kind of solution to their strangeness. Even when we suspect the accuracy of certain facts, they are still soothing, because they connect us to the known world. Even inaccurate facts have a kind of empirical electricity for Barnes, since they connect him to a larger informational zealousness. Wrong facts contain within themselves the ghost of their own accuracy, in the same way that a good parody says something true about its object.

Barnes has made knowingness into an aesthetic. For him, the world is, despite his games, old-fashionedly knowable. When we learn, in *Flaubert's Parrot*, about the complicating ironies of that calling card at the top of the Egyptian pyramid, we complicate our knowledge; but not very much, and it is always better, in Barnes's world, to know more than to know less. In the end, Barnes always wants to help, to inform, to solve, to charm, to boast. However he muddies the waters, he always ferries us across. He points out helpfully that the waters are now very muddy, because he has stirred them up, but he is still ferrying us.

Of course, all fictional description contains fact, and description is explanation. The writer must then make a revolution with this description-explanation. In Barnes's fiction, however, facts are separated from description and handed out like coins to the reader. Barnes's writing does little with them, descriptively. All this information comes from the known world, and merely passes through Barnes's writing on its way to the reader, who is also in the known world. It is as if Barnes's prose is merely a host to this passage.

As a result, his fiction is one of tidy statement. He likes to order his themes even as he proclaims that he is scattering ideas all over the floor. In the story "Experiment," in this new book, Barnes has fun with the jauntiness of his empirical load: a young man tells us about the strange tale of his Uncle Freddy, who as a young man in Paris in 1928 once took part in André Breton's Surrealist Group's researches into sexuality. The hearty Englishman, sitting next to Breton and Queneau, and forced to intellectualize about the commonsensical business of sex, is a fine *donnée*, and amusing. But it is precisely the jauntiness of Barnes's fact—did an Englishman really participate in these famous sessions?—which imprisons the story, and makes it a revolving conceit rather than a grasped truth. "Experiment" is itself an experiment, a controlled experiment, sealed and finite.

This tidiness is a peculiar problem of English fiction in this century. A writer such as D.H. Lawrence, who bullies his reader but who also bullies himself, whose prose is a violent bloom of awkwardness—such a writer is the exception in modern English fiction. Formal neatness, a fondness for over-explicitness or direct statement, and a fat hand with symbolism, are more characteristic. One sees this in early Forster, in William Golding, in Angus Wilson, in Doris Lessing; and in our own age, in Ian McEwan and Julian Barnes.

Kipling, whose stories have a vigorous reticence (even as his poems are ideological ballads), is a different exception to the English zeal for plain-speaking. Barnes's best story in this new book, "Evermore," about a woman's lifelong mourning for her brother, who was killed in the First World War, is strongly reminiscent of two Kipling stories on a similar theme, "The Gardener" and "Mary Postgate." In "Evermore," we learn of Miss Moss, an aging proofreader, who makes obsessive visits in her antique Morris Minor car to the French war cemetery where her brother lies. She cannot forget him, and has dedicated her life to remembrance.

This is a touching story. Here Barnes comes closest to defeating his own intellectual tidiness, and to producing something that discovers grief, rather than something that tells us about grief. But even here Barnes will not let his material flow its own way. He cannot resist bustling around. Where Kipling's two stories about a woman's grief subtract, Barnes's story over-supplies. Kipling seems to tell us everything about Mary Postgate, except about her obsessive hatred of the Germans. Barnes cannot help informing us that Miss Moss's life was "devoted ... entirely to her own commemorations." Miss Moss is given to ask herself the kinds of rhetorical questions, perfectly expressed, that only characters in stories asks themselves, such as: "Was it a vice to have become such a connoisseur of grief?" We are told about her "voluptuous selfishness of grief," a phrase whose own luxuriousness condescends, somewhat, to Miss Moss. And this sentimentality of explicitness: "She claimed no understanding of military matters. All she claimed was an understanding of grief."

The story is themed. Its own devotion to commemoration does not make clearer its protagonist's devotion, but drowns it. By the end, Barnes is interrupting, like Forster, and talking directly to the reader—making his own appeal, literalizing the theme of remembrance: "if this [forgetting the First World War] happened to the individual, could it not also happen on a national scale?"

Narrative must discover. The facts that it "discovers" already exist, of course; but great fiction is not daunted by the prior existence of the world. Great fiction appears to discover facts by giving us the impression that our reading of the text completes the bottom half of a discovery whose plaintive top stalk the writer has merely uncovered. Fiction should seem to offer itself to the reader's completion, not to the writer's. This whisper of conspiracy is one of fiction's necessary beauties. Perhaps this illusion of discovery, the uncovering of a world which is related to, but not continuous with, the known world, is fiction's greatest beauty: fiction's false bottom.

It cannot be said enough: this is not, as in the fiction of Julian Barnes, the false bottom of fact, by which we learn one certainty only to have it replaced by another, brighter or more complicated certainty. It is the false bottom of truth, whereby we learn many things, all of them bottomless. Fiction must not stroke the known. It must distress the undiscovered. A literature of fact, of knowingness, a fiction like Barnes's, knows too much and speaks too much. But a literature that discovers, that dares to know less, is always on the verge of what is not sayable, rather than at the end of what has just been said.

In such quietness, we may attend to Cather's large hush, as we wait for the message-carrying air to blow through our open window. •

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The Art of Association

By Peter Berkowitz

The Fragility of Freedom: Tocqueville on Religion, Democracy, and the American Future by Joshua Mitchell

(University of Chicago Press, 273 pp., $34.95)

Political questions in the United States are increasingly turning into moral questions. This resurgence of appeal to moral principle in political argument has by no means been restricted to conservatives: what initially attracted many to the message of the New Democrats in 1992 was Bill Clinton's acknowledgement of the political importance of individual responsibility, the quality of family life and the variety of voluntary associations that nourish public and private virtue. And while the left wing of the Democratic Party has often forsworn the simple language of conventional morality, one would have to be tone deaf or a sucker for euphemism to miss the mixture of moral principle and moralism that has animated its message.

In this contest of moralisms, religion seems to have gotten caught in the middle. There is, of course, Patrick Buchanan's rabble-rousing summons to "religious war"; and, more significantly, there is the extent to which the fate of the Republican Party has become bound up with the Christian Coalition, a surprisingly large and broad-based political movement. These developments have done little to improve religion's reputation among liberals. Indeed, the resurgence of religiously driven politics in America has probably only hardened the views of the appallingly large proportion of professors, journalists, and Democratic Party faithful who cannot bring themselves to recognize a theoretical or moral distinction between religion and superstition.

The distrust and the misunderstanding have led to a clash over fundamental convictions about the sources of human dignity. One unfortunate result of this "culture war" is that important policy questions about appropriate means and proper degree—for example, what government ought or ought not do so as to lend support to inner-city black churches, which have played a crucial role in saving many children from the temptation of the streets—get pushed aside by the intransigent insistence on furthering this higher end or undermining that perverse principle.

Meanwhile, in the academy, a highly stylized debate about the legitimate forms of political argument marches steadily along, a debate that can easily seem sterile and out of touch with the turbulent spectacle presented by the actual politics of America. According to John Rawls, liberalism embodies an "idea of public reason," and this idea dictates that citizens of a liberal democracy as much as possible avoid making political arguments based on moral and religious principles that their fellow citizens cannot be expected to share. Against this approach, a chorus of deliberative democratic, civic republican and postmodern critics insist that contemporary liberalism has impoverished American politics by seeking to exclude, or systematically to avoid, questions about first principles, and so they urge the opposite. Opinions sharpen, nerves fray, tempers flare, and so the call for increased public debate about moral and political values seems a bit like trying to put out a fire by dousing it with kerosene.

Who would not wish to see the quality of political debate in America improved? But by seeking to deregulate public debate, as it were, scholarly critics of the idea of public reason have embraced their rivals' dubious premise that the crucial issue is regulation: what is, or is not, permitted into the discussion. In this way both parties have obscured more primary questions about the qualities of mind and character that individuals must exercise to set public discussion in motion, the passions that tend to disrupt actual deliberations among flesh and blood human beings, and the institutional supports of the virtues that enable citizens to keep deliberation on track and running effectively—the sort of thing that John Stuart Mill had in mind when, at the end of *On Liberty*, he criticized the temptation to lay down rules defining the parameters of "fair discussion."

In appealing from principles of what was "fair" to what he called "the real morality of public discussion," Mill denied that the restraints governing public debate should come from law or public authority, and he pointed instead toward the individual as the source of restraint. The "real morality of public discussion," in Mill's view, involved the exercise of moral virtue, and intelligent judgment about the qualities of mind and character of one's interlocutors' judgments:

> Condemning everyone on whichever side of the argument he places himself in whose mode of advocacy either want of candour, or malignity, nigotry or intolerance of feeling manifest themselves; but not inferring these vices from the side which a person takes, though it be the contrary side of the question to our own: and giving merited honour to every one, whatever opinion he may hold, who has calmness to see and honesty to state what his opponents and their opinions really are, exaggerating nothing to their discredit, keeping nothing back which tells, or can be supposed to tell, in their favor.

But virtue, as Mill knew, does not grow on trees. What institutions in a democracy foster the virtues on which its public life depends? What effects, good and bad, does the spirit of democracy have on individual character? Such questions, as Mill was one of the first to point out, were usefully and beautifully explored by Alexis de Tocqueville.

When it appeared in France in 1835, the first part of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* was immediately hailed as a masterpiece. Across the Channel, Mill proclaimed in a lengthy discussion in the *London and Westminster Review* that *Democracy in America* "has at once taken its rank among the most remarkable productions of our time." In the United States the initial reception of *Democracy in America* was mixed, but it was not long before its wisdom was recognized, so much so that in 1889 the political scientist Woodrow Wilson could write that Tocqueville's ability to illuminate, through a consideration of philosophical principles, the actual workings of American democracy was "possibly beyond rivalry."

Yet his book has never really found a comfortable home in the American mind. There are several reasons for this. For a start, it was the work of a French Catholic aristocrat recording observations gleaned on a nine-month journey through America in 1831. Moreover, the two volumes that compose *Democracy in America* can at first

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glance seem to present a congeries of anecdote and speculation on a bewildering array of topics ranging from geography, history and sociology to moral psychology, political theory and theology. And *Democracy in America* is explicitly addressed by Tocqueville not to Americans but to his own countrymen, to bring to their attention the necessity of the democratic revolution that was underway in America and to provide a knowledge of the new age of equality that would enable them to mitigate democracy's vices and take advantage of its benefits.

Yet the very factors that can seem to make Tocqueville unfit to serve for Americans as a guide to democracy are inseparably connected to the distinctive virtues that he brought to his task, and which have made his observations about the principles of democracy, occasioned by his visit to America, enduring and worthy of careful study today. In democratic and Protestant America, Tocqueville could observe from a revealing angle what was distinctive in American beliefs, practices and institutions. Moreover, by bringing to light the principles that connect history, political institutions and longings of the soul in America, Tocqueville's approach can provide an antidote to the distortions caused these days by the practice in American universities of herding knowledge into isolated and jealously guarded disciplines.

Recent years have witnessed a surge of interest in Tocqueville's thought, but the interest has been highly selective. Much of the new enthusiasm has revolved around Tocqueville's diagnosis of an infirmity of the spirit that he called "individualism" and defined as "a calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends." Democracy pushes this tendency to an extreme, so that "each man is forever thrown back on himself alone, and there is danger that he may be shut up in the solitude of his own heart." This picture of the isolated American has struck a responsive chord among American political theorists and social scientists, as it seemed to describe an increasingly widespread and menacing experience in American life.

Even more than his diagnosis, one of the remedies that Tocqueville prescribed to combat individualism has captured the imagination of students of politics, and recently has reached beyond scholars to inspire members of Congress, high-ranking White House staff and even the president himself. That remedy is "the art of association." Tocqueville maintained that Americans have a special aptitude for this art. The associations Tocqueville had in mind were not created by the state or the law, but by the initiative of energetic and self-reliant individuals. Their benefits, he believed, extended well beyond the achievement of the immediate economic, moral or political ends for which individuals establish them. Associational life shifts the gaze of individuals away from themselves toward others; it generates in each an awareness of the needs and the limitations of others; it enlarges self-interest narrowly conceived by making vivid the private advantage that flows from cooperation for the public good; and it teaches the habits of cooperation and self-restraint by giving individuals regular opportunities to practice them.

Tocqueville was talking, in other words, about civil society, which consists of the host of voluntary associations and the various social networks that connect them. This is a topic which of late has generated enormous interest. What is today referred to as "the civil society argument" consists of three theses. The first is the very Tocquevillian thesis that a vibrant civil society supports democracy in America by fostering certain habits of heart and mind. The second thesis, based upon casual observation and empirical study, is that for decades now civil society in America has been on the decline. The third thesis connects theory and empirical observation to policy, declaring that the well-being of democracy in America requires the revivification of civil society.

Enthusiasts of the civil society argument tend to divide into what might be called left Tocquevillians and right Tocquevillians. They differ over government's proper role in the restoration of civil society. The Tocquevillians of the left want government to play an active role by removing the social and economic forces that, they assert, have made people narrowly self-interested and isolated. They sometimes seem to believe that once government removes institutional barriers—especially social and economic barriers—citizens will naturally join together in all sorts of common enterprises. The Tocquevillians of the right, espousing a kind of reverse Midas principle, according to which everything that government touches turns to dross, think that the best thing that could be done for voluntary associations in America is for government to do less, to withdraw and create more space for the exercise of personal initiative. They seem to believe that the biggest institutional barrier to associational life in America is government itself, so that once it is removed, citizens will spontaneously seek out one another and cooperate for mutual advantage.

Things are not quite so simple, however, at least not from Tocqueville's own perspective. He did not think that voluntary associations were an all-purpose panacea for the infirmities that democracy fosters. For these associations themselves presupposed particular beliefs, practices and institutions. Too little at-

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tention has been paid to the fact that Tocqueville conceived of associating as an "art," a "technique," a "faculty and habit." Accordingly, in order for associational life to improve democratic citizens, democratic citizens must bring to the creation and the maintenance of their associations certain dispositions and skills. Voluntary associations not only generate what Robert Putnam calls social capital ("features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit"), they *presuppose* it. Before there can be social capital, moreover, there must be moral capital.

Tocqueville envisaged in modern democracy a relationship of reciprocal influence between character and civil society. In America, Tocqueville argued, it was in a certain kind of family, and through the discipline of a specific set of religious beliefs and practices, that the formation of character crucial to political and civic association occurred. Tocqueville believed that the political was dependent on the non-political, and the public on the private; and in this way he established a connection between realms whose integrity, he insisted, must be respected in order for each to benefit the other.

But Tocqueville's emphasis on the political importance of family and religion is a rather disconcerting feature of his argument. It implies that the fate of democracy in America depends upon two delicate institutions which, in a liberal democracy that honors the sovereignty of the individual, are exceptionally difficult to manage and maintain.

In the judgment of Joshua Mitchell, Tocqueville discerns the nonpolitical foundations of democratic political life with almost unrivaled acuity; and this is owed to his understanding of the fundamental tendencies and inherent instabilities of what Mitchell interestingly calls "the democratic soul." It is the striking argument of Mitchell's learned and thought-provoking book that Tocqueville's understanding of the democratic soul, "the kind of soul that has come to dominate in the modern age," and whose dominant passion is the "love of equality," is decisively informed by an "Augustinian conception of the self."

Mitchell's central thesis neither requires nor precludes that Tocqueville was a believing Christian. In speaking of an Augustinian conception of the self, what Mitchell has in mind is primarily a view of human desires and passions. On the view that Mitchell ascribes to Tocqueville—and that he believes received its classic formulation in the writings of Augustine—the self oscillates between two sets of extremes, extremes of high and low, internal and external. The self is always in motion, since human beings are composite creatures formed of conflicting elements. Capable of exalted deeds and reaching upward toward heights of devotion, human beings are also prone to self-absorbed despair and depravity.

At the same time, human beings run the risk of succumbing to opposing kinds of selfish forgetting. Easily ensnared in a web of their own memories and imaginings, men and women lose sight of the world outside of themselves and collapse inward into a brooding and narrow egoism. Or, in the attempt to escape from themselves, individuals careen recklessly outward, restlessly seeking satisfaction in physical pleasure, reputation and wealth. The oscillation in the self between high and low, between inner and outer, can be moderated, but it cannot be abolished without also abolishing our humanity.

While Mitchell himself is more inclined to stress its "invisible" or metaphysical foundations, the Augustinian conception of the self can make an impressive claim to being more empirical than metaphysical. Although it speaks of things that do not lend themselves to being counted, weighed or measured, it is based on observations of the desires and the passions that actually move men and women. For this reason, one need not affirm Augustine's particular account of God, salvation and eternity in order to embrace his moral psychology.

Mitchell hints heavy-handedly that Augustinian theology supplies the answers to the problems that the Augustinian conception of the self poses. Here, if only in his earnest enthusiasm, Mitchell parts ways with Tocqueville. For Tocqueville adopts a conception of the Augustinian self that is austere. His understanding of the self provides no guarantee to the pious that their prayers will be heeded or that their search for transcendence will be rewarded. Nor does it provide particular comfort to rationalists and progressives, since it dwells on the recalcitrance of the material out of which human beings are made. In this way it suggests that there are serious limits to the pursuit of happiness and the cooperation for mutual advantage, limits that are inscribed in human nature and cannot be eliminated by social engineering or psychotherapy.

A useful science of politics, according to Tocqueville, must grasp that the soul,

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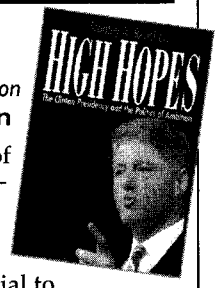

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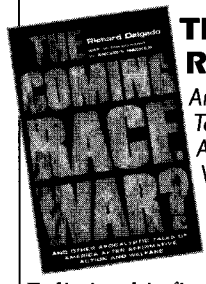

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in different ages and under changing conditions, tends toward peculiar forms of immoderation. The defining feature of the modern or democratic age, he maintains, is the fact of equality. Tocqueville did not mean to assert, of course, that everybody is to become equal. He argued instead that there was an irresistible movement toward equality in the modern age. The condition of equality, in his view, gives a distinctive cast and coloring to the movements of the soul. Equality breeds new and impatient desires, rouses passions both petty and tyrannical, makes the heart mild and compassionate, brings about a universal but small-scale ambitiousness directed toward the industrious pursuit of comfort and wealth, fosters a host of small and humble virtues and weakens certain resplendent and useful vices. Tocqueville saw equality as inevitable and just, but he did not believe that all its consequences were good for the human spirit.

Mitchell has an especially keen eye for Tocqueville's analysis of what might be called the dialectic of pride and envy. The democratic soul wishes to stand apart as unique *and* to be recognized as equal to all. Pride makes each wish to be different, but envy wants nobody to be better than anybody else. Envy, which hates difference, is the more democratic of the two; and where equality is king, envy prevails. The democratic tendency is to extend the rule of equality to every domain, effacing differences, obliterating boundaries and leveling hierarchies. Yet the more that conditions are equalized, the more offensive becomes the slightest hint of inequality. To eradicate the offense of difference, individuals are increasingly forced to rely on the state, for the state alone has the power to eradicate difference and make equality actual. Pride may reassert itself in the demand that difference be respected, but this pride is only a disguised form of envy inasmuch as it calls on the state to enforce equal respect for all differences. Thus does the thirst for equality predispose men and women to exchange liberty for a central power that can impose a comprehensive equality through law. And in this way the democratic passion of envy prepares individuals to consent to a sort of gentle "administrative despotism."

What must be done to combat the discontents of democracy and to remedy the diseases to which it is liable? The short answer of today's Tocquevillians, again, is association; but the short answer must be supplemented with a more precise appreciation of Tocqueville's understanding of the benefits that the art of association confers, and the discipline that it presupposes. For one thing, it is important to see that associations do not so much extend the spirit of democracy as act as a counterpoise to it. Association is a democratic expedient for securing certain advantages of aristocracy. Associations are democratic in the sense that they are not based on hereditary social status and are open to all; but they are aristocratic in the sense that they foster moral and intellectual virtue, and they are suited to do so because "feelings and ideas are renewed, the heart enlarged, and the understanding developed only by the reciprocal action of men one upon the other."

Still, associational life can only foster moral and intellectual virtue if individuals endowed with a range of such qualities are already in place forming and maintaining associations. Since human beings are not born with the self-reliance, the discipline and the rational understanding that the making of associations requires, such individuals must themselves be made or educated. Indeed, associational life was but one of an integrated set of institutional mechanisms in America that, Tocqueville argued, worked to counteract or to moderate the envy, the restlessness and the individualism that democracy engenders. More basic to the maintenance of democracy in America than associational life, or perhaps the most basic part of associational life, according to Tocqueville, were family and religion.

It was the utility to democracy of family life and religious belief that Tocqueville stressed. Families and religion shaped mores, the fundamental and sometimes half-articulate habits of the heart and mind, which were more important to democracy than good laws, because it was such habits or qualities of character which inclined and enabled citizens to respect, uphold and administer law. In families, women shaped mores, and Americans learned to appreciate simple pleasures, love order, respect enduring ties and understand their happiness in relation both to ancestors and descendants. Christianity in America palliated envy by teaching individuals to appreciate the frailties of human nature and the limits of the institutions men formed, and not to ask too much of the world. By elevating the individual's gaze from the here and now, religion also fostered the virtues of restraint and forbearance, and promoted what Mitchell calls "habits of long-term thinking."

Mitchell shows in convincing detail that Tocqueville's famous doctrine of "self-interest properly understood" presupposes specific qualities of mind and character as well as the institutions that foster them. According to this doctrine, which Tocqueville believed was common wisdom in America, virtue is estimable not because it is beautiful but because it is useful. Promoting the public good is worthwhile not for selfless reasons, but because it can be seen to serve one's private advantage and further one's rational self-interest. But the rub, once again, is that rational men and women are made, not born. Owing to what Mitchell calls the self's "predilection for irrationality," the capacity to grasp one's self-interest accurately and act on it effectively requires a certain discipline of character. It was the taste for order, the virtue of forbearance and the habit of long-term thinking taught in America by the family and religion that, in Tocqueville's view, were crucial in enabling individuals to overcome destructive passions, see the connections between their own good and that of the public, and sacrifice "a thousand ephemeral pleasures" in the pursuit of a "lasting happiness."

But that was then and this is now. In light of the democratization of the family, the movement of women out of the home and into the marketplace, and the rise of the religious right, it is easy to mock Tocqueville's portrait of enlightened self-interest rooted in domestic bliss and simple religiosity. As Mitchell's instructive book demonstrates, however, it is more useful to understand the logic of Tocqueville's argument, the links he illuminates between democracy, virtue and the nonpolitical institutions. What has changed since Tocqueville wrote is not democracy's need for the virtues that were once fostered by associational life, family and religious belief. What has changed is our capacity to satisfy that need.

The partisans of deliberative democracy will not restore that capacity. They are psychologically naïve, in their lack of appreciation of the instability in the human self and their studied obliviousness to the process by which democracy exacerbates the universal human propensities for envy, self-indulgence and the taste for physical pleasure and comfort; and they are sociologically naïve, in their opinion that democracy is made more deliberative merely by eliminating the obstacles to equality created by social structure and the economy, as if it were not also vital to identify the institutional mechanisms

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that must be reestablished or introduced to prepare individuals to master the dangerous passions that equality inflames and to nurture the salutary longings that equality subdues.

Tocqueville's notion of the democratic soul also exposes certain limitations of the civil society argument. Those who describe the dilemma in terms of social capital take their economic metaphor too far and not far enough. They take it too far by demanding a mathematical precision in the study of moral and political life, excluding from analysis what resists being counted, weighed or measured—such things, that is, as passion and virtue—as if the realities of moral and political life must be flattened or hollowed out so as to conform to the dictates of right method. And they do not take it far enough inasmuch as they overlook the obvious reality that social capital, like financial capital, can be wisely invested or recklessly squandered, acquired justly or through exploitation and violence. Voluntary associations and civil society have a dark side, which has been tragically illustrated in the recent past by those walking treasure-troves of social capital, Timothy McVeigh and Yigal Amir.

Reflection on the advantages and the disadvantages of social capital, like consideration of the preconditions of effective deliberation, leads directly into the domain of ethics and questions of what is good. And I take this conclusion to be consistent with liberal principles. Liberals can affirm that equality is necessary and just, while acknowledging that democracy has its disadvantages; and friends of liberty can come to democracy's defense by explaining how democracy depends on virtues that it does not effectively summon and even forcibly discourages. In presenting *Democracy in America* to "true friends of human liberty and dignity," Tocqueville exhibited the rare friendship that demands that hard truths be spoken.

PETER BERKOWITZ teaches government at Harvard University and is the author of *Nietzsche: The Ethics of an Immoralist* (Harvard University Press).

TRB *continued from page 6*

And they all have to do with, well, staying home and making babies. The most serious comes from Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, who is about to propose the Homemaker IRA Bill. The legislation corrects what Hutchison calls discrimination against homemakers. It allows families with one spouse at home to contribute up to $4,000 to an IRA—the same amount as families with two working spouses. The other two ideas are experimental in the same vein: Republican pollster and MTV commentator Kellyanne Fitzpatrick proposed a homemaker tax credit in *The Wall Street Journal*, and Walter Tucker, writing in the *Standard*, proposed reviving the family wage, a progressive-era pay scale that paid a working man enough so that he wouldn't have to "farm out his wife and children to feed and clothe all of them."

It's not hard to read the coded message here. After all, the bill could have been called the Household IRA, and applied to single-parent homes or unemployed fathers. Instead, Hutchison chose to reward the long-neglected homemaker who works to "rear the children and manage the household."

More important than the extra votes this might win for Bob Dole is the message it sends to American women: find a husband and settle down. You can't take advantage of the homemaker IRA if you're home alone, and no one is paying taxes. Leaving aside the obvious—that Hutchison and Fitzpatrick are hardly the ideal poster girls for the Future Homemakers of America movement—there is the question of who this helps. It may be true that the majority of women polled say they work because they have to, and would rather stay home. But nearly $2,000 more in savings, or a tax credit, will hardly make up for their annual salary. The tax shelters are an extra boon for wealthier women like, say, Hutchison and Dunn, if they should one year decide to stay home.

In the end, it seems the invitations into Dunn's all-female tent are being doled out very selectively. When it comes to welfare mothers, for example, the GOP women aren't quite so worried about who stays home with the kids. Jennifer Dunn—again—has been designated as spokeswoman for the latest round of Republican welfare proposals. At a hearing last month, Dunn berated Mary Jo Bane, Assistant Secretary for Health and Human Services, for defending Clinton's exemption from the work requirement for families headed by a single parent "who has a demonstrated inability to obtain needed child care." And Dunn did it in that same gentle tone. "I'm going to interrupt you Mrs. Bane, because we have heard all of this before," she barked. "I suspect that what we are seeing is a situation where you are setting this bill up to be vetoed again." So much for tenderness.

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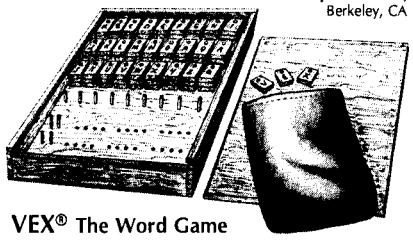
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WASHINGTON DIARIST

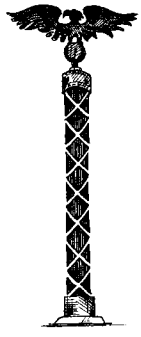
Bosnians

IN 1860, THE ITALIAN NATIONAList writer Massimo Taparelli d'Azeglio wrote: "We have created Italy. Now all we need is to create Italians." And fitfully, violently, through language and economic prosperity, they did. Today in Europe, the most urgent burden of nation-building has passed to the leaders of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Dayton agreement awarded them a Bosnian state—a weakened and fractured and bloodied one—but a nation-state nonetheless. Now the Bosnians must make a nation of themselves. It may prove as difficult, and necessary, as survival itself.

THE WAR FOR BOSNIA, THE WAR between the Serbian struggle for purity and the Bosnian fight for a place in the Balkans was, for all intents and purposes, lost. Sarajevo and Srebrenica made that clear, forever. But after Dayton, the West began to flatter itself where it had once excused itself, insisting that Dayton was something more than the best of bad choices. The rhetoric of redemption enveloped the dispatch of every soldier and the promise of every dollar. But while Dayton finally did end the genocide, its implementation has been marked by the same diffidence, the same obtuseness that characterized the response to Serbia's aggression.

THE FAINTHEARTEDNESS OF NATO leaders who refuse to arrest the war criminals still leading the Bosnian Serbs; the failure to formulate a genuine policy of return for those driven from their homes, Muslim, Serb or Croat; the parlous state of the multicultural ideal, in the lives and in the minds of the Bosnian people—these are the facts on the ground. And that is only half of the ground. The other half, the fundamentalist enclave of "Republika Srpska," remains in the throes of a Mladic-Karazdic terror-regime where ethnic cleansing continues, militias still roam the towns and cities, and Serb dissidents are threatened, arrested, even killed. These are the blighted conditions in which a Bosnian identity must be forged. The Italians, no doubt, had it easier.

THE DIFFICULTY OF CREATING such a people as the "Bosnians" is not least a philosophical one. The Muslims of Bosnia, and their allies abroad, fought for Bosnia because it represented the ideal of a multicultural nationality and because it insisted on the existence of a minority culture amid raging majority nationalisms. In short, they fought for the particular in the name of the universal. By maintaining a belief in pluralism even in the darkest days of the war, they seemingly reconciled the philosophical problem of defending national identity even while appealing to universal values of tolerance and civility. But that was because theirs was a particular, pluralist nationalism that may not even deserve that name, at least not yet.



WITHOUT ROMANTICIZING Bosnia as an Eden of understanding, it is irrefutable that it was, in Europe, unique. Not based in language (the Bosnians speak Serbo-Croatian), ethnicity (they are south-Slavs, too) or even religion (they were and still are markedly secular), Bosnian identity was premised precisely on the absence of any Herderian pride in Volk or national spirit. Now, after five years of a war that knew no other pride and had no other spirit, the Bosnians are being asked to recapture their past tolerance and create an identity that is less particular, not more, for having suffered, less vengeful, not more, for having been persecuted. It is, on their part and ours, asking a lot.

WHETHER A MUSLIM BOSNIAN NAtionalism eventually results from the attempted genocide of the Bosnian Muslims will be the ultimate measure of Bosnia's character. Indeed, it is remarkable that the Muslim identity today is as weak as it is, given that hundreds of thousands of Bosnians—faithful and utterly faithless—were murdered simply for being Muslims. It is perhaps the greatest achievement of the Bosnian people that, persecuted for an identity that was almost as alien to them as it was to their persecutors, they did not retreat and retrench into that identity. They still find it incidental. (And the presence of a few hundred Iranian soldiers is not likely to threaten this disposition.) If five years of persecution as a Muslim doesn't make you a fervent one, nothing will. And so, if Bosnia survives as a state, and that is by no means certain, it will remain a profoundly multicultural entity, and any identity will, of necessity, be multicultural, too.

THIS IS A NECESSITY, NOT BECAUSE of any natural goodness on the part of the Bosnian government (which recently has given in to disturbingly sectarian impulses), but because it is the only way that the state can remain unified. If the Sarajevo government were to turn monocultural (and this would give the Serbs their final victory) Bosnia would truly be doomed, and indeed lose its very raison d'être. But if the Bosnians persist, and still believe in what they were fighting for all along, Bosnia will be a nation of citizens rather than of blood, a form of belonging ultimately accountable only to an idea. It will be the only nationalism of which Europe can be proud.

MY SISTER WENT TO BOSNIA LAST month on behalf of the Danish government's immigration service. Her job was to help determine whether or not it would be safe to repatriate the more than 20,000 Bosnian refugees now living in Denmark. Apart from the shock of the complete devastation, village to village, house to house, and the sight of IFOR troops virtually everywhere, one impression of hers stuck in my mind: the hostility of those who stayed toward those who fled. In more than a week of interviews, no one ever addressed the question of how they would welcome back their former friends and neighbors. One schoolteacher in Sarajevo had only contempt for those who fled, saying that when they returned, perhaps those who stayed could take *their* vacation.

INDEED, THE PEOPLE SHE TALKED to found concerns about the refugees almost obscene: How could they be expected to empathize with Bosnians who hadn't been shelled, or beaten, and who indeed seemed rather prosperous with their new clothes and foreign currency? It is as if those who fled have been erased from the only memories that now count for those who remained—the memories of the war. "I can almost not bear to hear anymore about this—this concern with the refugees—when we had to stay and suffer," the delegation's Bosnian translator said at the end of the week. "If I had a choice, I would pack my bags and leave for Australia tomorrow."

THIS MAY, IN THE END, BE THE most lasting, the most debilitating testament to the Serbian destruction of Bosnia: the loathing that so many Bosnians now have for their land, and for each other. The fragility of their identity was always the source of their unity, as if they knew that their difference was what held them together. Now it can't even do that.

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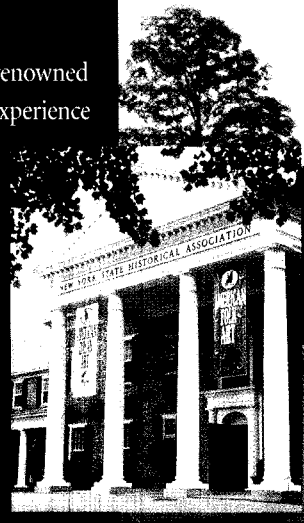

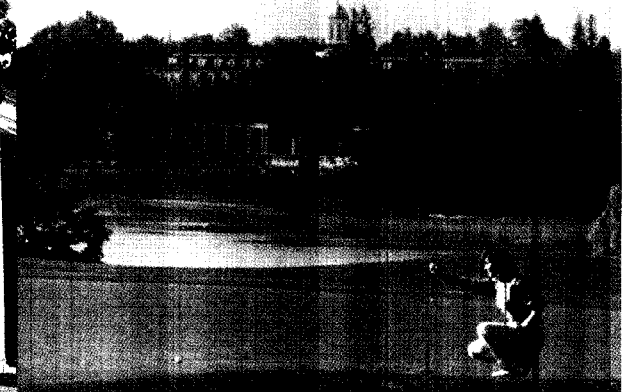

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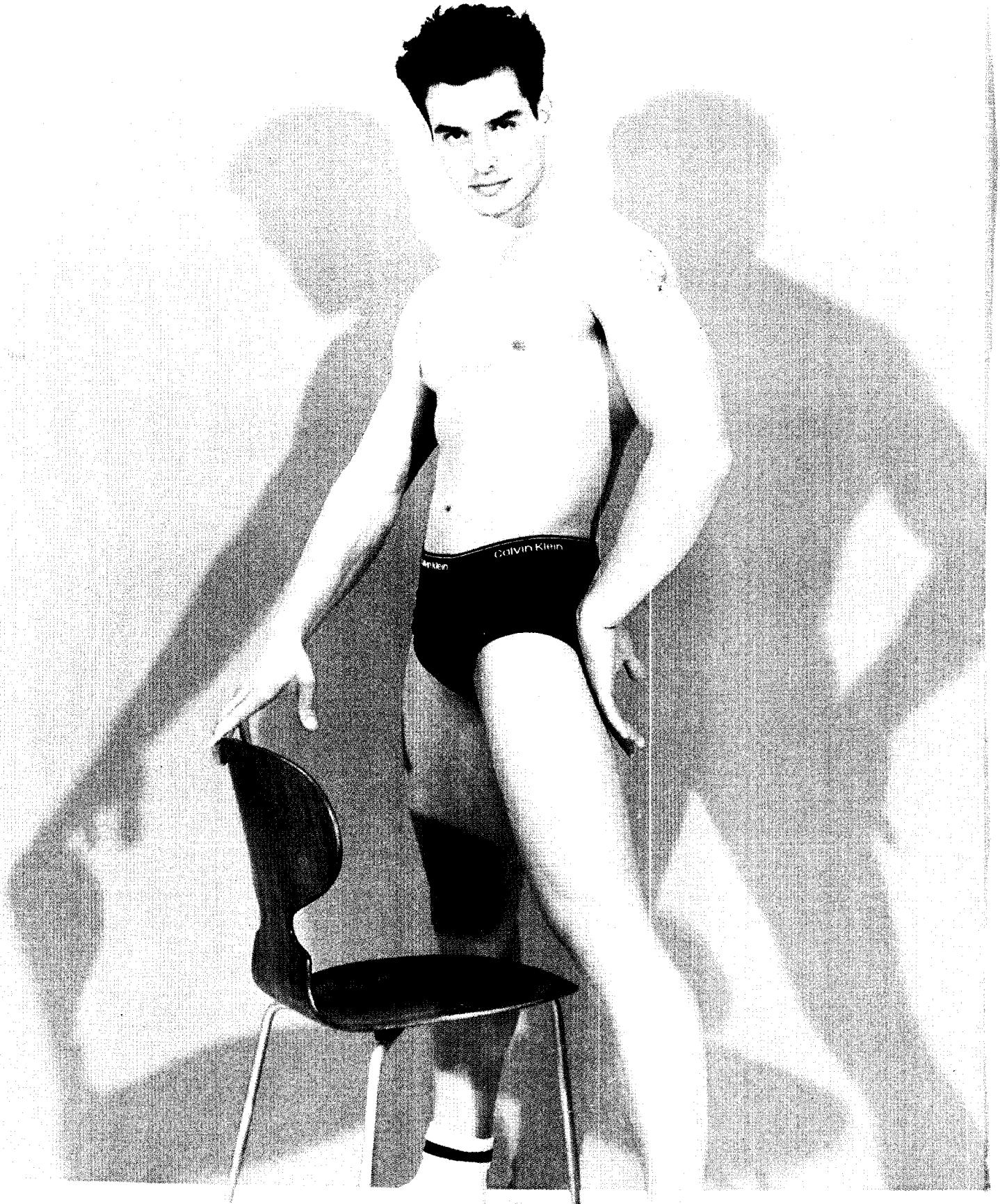

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